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BRING UP THE GUNS.

BY BOYD CABLE.

WHEN Jack Duncan and Hugh Morrison suddenly had it brought home to them that they ought to join the New Armies, they lost little time in doing so. Since they were chums of long standing in a City office, it went without saying that they decided to join and 'go through it' together, but it was much more open to argument what branch of the Service or regiment they should join.

They discussed the question in all its bearings, but being as ignorant of the Army and its ways as the average young Englishman was in the early days of the war, they had little evidence except varied and contradictory hearsay to act upon. Both being about twenty-five they were old enough and business-like enough to consider the matter in a business-like way, and yet both were young enough to be influenced by the flavour of romance they found in a picture they came across at the time. It was entitled 'Bring up the Guns,' and it showed a horsed battery in the wild whirl of advancing into action, the horses straining and stretching in front of the bounding guns, the drivers crouched forward or sitting up plying whip and spur, the officers galloping and waving the men on, dust swirling from leaping hoofs and wheels, whip-thongs streaming, heads tossing, reins flying loose, altogether a blood-stirring picture of energy and action, speed and power.

'I've always had a notion,' said Duncan reflectively, 'that I'd like to have a good whack at riding. One doesn't get much chance of it in city life, and this looks like a good chance.'

'And I've heard it said,' agreed Morrison, 'that a fellow with any education stands about the best chance in artillery work. We'd might as well plump for something where we can use the bit of brains we've got.'

'That applies to the Engineers too, doesn't it?' said Duncan. 'And the pottering about we did for a time with electricity might help there.'

'Um-m,' Morrison agreed doubtfully, still with an appreciative eye on the picture of the flying guns. 'Rather slow work though—digging and telegraph and pontoon and that sort of thing.'

'Right-oh,' said Duncan with sudden decision. 'Let's try for the Artillery.'

'Yes. We'll call that settled,' said Morrison; and both stood a few minutes looking with a new interest at the picture, already with a dawning sense that they 'belonged,' that these gallant gunners and leaping teams were 'Ours,' looking forward with a little quickening of the pulse to the day when they, too, would go whirling into action in like desperate and heart-stirring fashion.

'Come on,' said Morrison. 'Let's get it over. To the recruiting-office—quick march.'

And so came two more gunners into the Royal Regiment.

When the long, the heart-breakingly long period of training and waiting for their guns, and more training and slow collecting of their horses, and more training was at last over, and the battery sailed for France, Morrison and Duncan were both sergeants and 'Numbers One' in charge of their respective guns; and before the battery had been in France three months Morrison had been promoted to Battery Sergeant-Major.

The battery went through the routine of trench warfare and dug its guns into deep pits, and sent its horses miles away back, and sat in the same position for months at a time, had slack spells and busy spells, shelled and was shelled, and at last moved up to play its part in The Push.

Of that part I don't propose to tell more than the one incident—an incident of machine-pattern sameness to the lot of many batteries.

The infantry had gone forward again and the ebb-tide of battle was leaving the battery with many others almost beyond the water-mark of effective range. Preparations were made for an advance. The Battery Commander went forward and reconnoitred the new position the battery was to move into, everything was packed up and made ready, while the guns still continued to pump out long range fire. The Battery Commander came in again and explained everything to his officers and gave the necessary detailed

orders to the Sergeant-Major, and presently received orders of date and hour to move.

This was in the stages of The Push when rain was the most prominent and uncomfortable feature of the weather. The guns were in pits built over with strong walls and roofing of sandbags and beams which were weather-tight enough, but because the floors of the pits were lower than the surface of the ground, it was only by a constant struggle that the water was held back from draining in and forming a miniature lake in each pit. Round and between the guns was a mere churned-up sea of sticky mud. As soon as the new battery position was selected a party went forward to it to dig and prepare places for the guns. The Battery Commander went off to select a suitable point for observation of his fire, and in the battery the remaining gunners busied themselves in preparation for the move. The digging party were away all the afternoon, all night, and on through the next day. Their troubles and tribulations don't come into this story, but from all they had to say afterwards they were real and plentiful enough.

Towards dusk a scribbled note came back from the Battery Commander at the new position to the officer left in charge with the guns, and the officer sent the orderly straight on down with it to the Sergeant-Major with a message to send word back for the teams to move up.

'All ready here,' said the Battery Commander's note. 'Bring up the guns and firing battery waggons as soon as you can. I'll meet you on the way.'

The Sergeant-Major glanced through the note and shouted for the Numbers One, the sergeants in charge of each gun. He had already arranged with the officer exactly what was to be done when the order came, and now he merely repeated his orders rapidly to the sergeants and told them to 'get on with it.' When the Lieutenant came along five minutes after, muffled to the ears in a wet mackintosh, he found the gunners hard at work.

'I started in to pull the sandbags clear, sir,' reported the Sergeant-Major. 'Right you are,' said the Lieutenant. 'Then you'd better put the double detachments on to pull one gun out and then the other. We must man-handle 'em back clear of the trench ready for the teams to hook in when they come along.'

For the next hour every man, from the Lieutenant and Sergeant-Major down, sweated and hauled and slid and floundered in slippery mud and water, dragging gun after gun out of its pit and back a

half dozen yards clear. It was quite dark when they were ready, and the teams splashed up and swung round their guns. A fairly heavy bombardment was carrying steadily on along the line, the sky winked and blinked and flamed in distant and near flashes of gun fire, and the air trembled to the vibrating roar and sudden thunder-claps of their discharge, the whine and moan and shriek of the flying shells. No shells had fallen near the battery position for some little time, but, unfortunately, just after the teams had arrived, a German battery chose to put over a series of five-point-nines unpleasantly close. The drivers sat, motionless blotches of shadow against the flickering sky, while the gunners strained and heaved on wheels and drag-ropes to bring the trails close enough to drop on the hooks. A shell dropped with a crash about fifty yards short of the battery and the pieces flew whining and whistling over the heads of the men and horses. Two more swooped down out of the sky with a rising wail-rush-roar of sound that appeared to be bringing the shells straight down on top of the workers' heads. Some ducked and crouched close to earth, and both shells passed just over and fell in leaping gusts of flame and ground-shaking crashes beyond the teams. Again the fragments hissed and whistled past and lumps of earth and mud fell spattering and splashing and thumping over men and guns and teams. A driver yelped suddenly, the horses in another team snorted and plunged, and then out of the thick darkness that seemed to shut down after the searing light of the shell-burst flames came sounds of more plunging hoofs, a driver's voice cursing angrily, threshings and splashings and stamping. 'Horse down here . . . bring a light . . . whoa, steady, boy . . . where's that light ?'

Three minutes later : 'Horse killed, driver wounded in the arm, sir,' reported the Sergeant-Major. 'Riding leader Number Two gun, and centre driver of its waggon.'

'Those spare horses near ?' said the Lieutenant quickly. 'Right. Call up a pair ; put 'em in lead ; put the odd driver waggon centre.'

Before the change was completed and the dead horse dragged clear, the first gun was reported hooked on and ready to move, and was given the order to 'Walk march' and pull out on the wrecked remnant of a road that ran behind the position. Another group of five-nines came over before the others were ready, and still the drivers and teams waited motionless for the clash that told of the trail-eye dropping on the hook.

'Get to it, gunners,' urged the Sergeant-Major, as he saw some

of the men instinctively stop and crouch to the yell of the approaching shell. 'Time we were out of this.'

'Hear, bloomin' hear,' drawled one of the shadowy drivers. 'An' if you wants to go to bed, Lanky'—to one of the crouching gunners—'just lemme get this gun away fust, an' then you can curl up in that blanky shell-'ole.'

There were no more casualties getting out, but one gun stuck in a shell-hole and took the united efforts of the team and as many gunners as could crowd on to the wheels and drag-ropes to get it moving and out on to the road. Then slowly, one by one, with a gunner walking and swinging a lighted lamp at the head of each team, the guns moved off along the pitted road. It was no road really, merely a wheel-rutted track that wound in and out the biggest shell-holes. The smaller ones were ignored, simply because there were too many of them to steer clear of, and into them the limber and gun wheels dropped bumping, and were hauled out by sheer team and man power. It took four solid hours to cover less than half a mile of sodden, spongy, pulpy, wet ground, riddled with shell-holes, swimming in greasy mud and water. The ground they covered was peopled thick with all sorts of men who passed or crossed their way singly, in little groups, in large parties—wounded, hobbling wearily or being carried back, parties stumbling and fumbling a way up to some vague point ahead with rations and ammunition on pack animals and pack-men, the remnants of a battalion coming out crusted from head to foot in slimy wet mud, bowed under the weight of their packs and kits and arms; empty ammunition waggons and limbers lurching and bumping back from the gun line, the horses staggering and slipping, the drivers struggling to hold them on their feet, to guide the wheels clear of the worst holes; a string of pack-mules filing past, their drivers dismounted and leading, and men and mules ploughing anything up to knee depth in the mud, flat pannier-pouches swinging and jerking on the animals' sides, the brass tops of the 18-pounder shell-cases winking and gleaming faintly in the flickering lights of the gun flashes. But of all these fellow wayfarers over the battlefield the battery drivers and gunners were hardly conscious. Their whole minds were so concentrated on the effort of holding and guiding and urging on their horses round or over the obstacle of the moment, a deeper and more sticky patch than usual, an extra large hole, a shattered tree stump, a dead horse, the wreck of a broken-down waggon, that they had no thought for anything

outside these. The gunners were constantly employed manning the wheels and heaving on them with cracking muscles, hooking on drag-ropes to one gun and dragging it clear of a hole, unhooking and going floundering back to hook on to another and drag it in turn out of its difficulty.

The Battery Commander met them at a bad dip where the track degenerated frankly into a mud bath—and how he found or kept the track or ever discovered them in that aching wilderness is one of the mysteries of war and the ways of Battery Commanders. It took another two hours, two mud-soaked nightmare hours, to come through that next hundred yards. It was not only that the mud was deep and holding, but the slough was so soft at bottom that the horses had no foothold, could get no grip to haul on, could little more than drag their own weight through, much less pull the guns. The teams were doubled, the double team taking one gun or waggon through, and then going back for the other. The waggons were emptied of their shell and filled again on the other side of the slough; and this you will remember meant the gunners carrying the rounds across a couple at a time, wading and floundering through mud over their knee-boot tops, replacing the shells in the vehicle, and wading back for another couple. In addition to this they had to haul guns and waggons through practically speaking by man-power, because the teams, almost exhausted by the work and with little more than strength to get themselves through, gave bare assistance to the pull. The wheels, axle deep in the soft mud, were hauled round spoke by spoke, heaved and yo-hoed forward inches at a time.

When at last all were over, the teams had to be allowed a brief rest—brief because the guns must be in position and under cover before daylight came—and stood dejectedly with hanging ears, heaving flanks, and trembling legs. The gunners dropped prone or squatted almost at the point of exhaustion in the mud. But they struggled up, and the teams strained forward into the breast collars again when the word was given, and the weary procession trailed on at a jerky snail's pace once more.

As they at last approached the new position the gun flashes on the horizon were turning from orange to primrose, and although there was no visible lightening of the Eastern sky, the drivers were sensible of a faintly recovering use of their eyes, could see the dim shapes of the riders just ahead of them, the black shadows of the holes, and the wet shine of the mud under their horses' feet.

The hint of dawn set the guns on both sides to work with trebled

energy. The new position was one of many others so closely set that the blazing flames from the gun muzzles seemed to run out to right and left in a spouting wall of fire that leaped and vanished, leaped and vanished without ceasing, while the loud ear-splitting claps from the nearer guns merged and ran out to the flanks in a deep drum roll of echoing thunder. The noise was so great and continuous that it drowned even the roar of the German shells passing overhead, the smash and *crump* of their fall and burst.

But the line of flashes sparkling up and down across the front beyond the line of our own guns told a plain enough tale of the German guns' work. The Sergeant-Major, plodding along beside the Battery Commander, grunted an exclamation.

'Boche is getting busy,' said the Battery Commander.

'Putting a pretty solid barrage down, isn't he, sir?' said the Sergeant-Major. 'Can we get the teams through that?'

'Not much hope,' said the Battery Commander, 'but, thank Heaven, we don't have to try, if he keeps barraging there. It is beyond our position. There are the gun-pits just off to the left.'

But, although the barrage was out in front of the position, there were a good many long-ranged shells coming beyond it to fall spouting fire and smoke and earth-clods on and behind the line of guns. The teams were flogged and lifted and spurred into a last desperate effort, wrenched the guns forward the last hundred yards and halted. Instantly they were unhooked, turned round, and started stumbling wearily back towards the rear; the gunners, reinforced by others scarcely less dead-beat than themselves by their night of digging in heavy wet soil, seized the guns and waggons, flung their last ounce of strength and energy into man-handling them up and into the pits. Two unlucky shells at that moment added heavily to the night's casualty list, one falling beside the retiring teams and knocking out half a dozen horses and two men, another dropping within a score of yards of the gun-pits, killing three and wounding four gunners. Later, at intervals, two more gunners were wounded by flying splinters from chance shells that continued to drop near the pits as the guns were laboriously dragged through the quagmire into their positions. But none of the casualties, none of the falls and screamings of the high-explosive shells, interrupted or delayed the work, and without rest or pause the men struggled and toiled on until the last gun was safely housed in its pit.

Then the battery cooks served out warm tea, and the men drank

greedily, and then, too worn out to be hungry or to eat the biscuit and cheese ration issued, flung themselves down in the pits under and round their guns and slept there in the trampled mud.

The Sergeant-Major was the last to lie down. Only after everyone else had ceased work, and he had visited each gun in turn and satisfied himself that all was correct, and made his report to the Battery Commander, did he seek his own rest. Then he crawled into one of the pits, and before he slept had a few words with the 'Number One' there, his old friend Duncan. The Sergeant-Major, feeling in his pockets for a match to light a cigarette, found the note which the Battery Commander had sent back and which had been passed on to him. He turned his torch light on it and read it through to Duncan—'Bring up the guns and firing battery waggons . . .' and then chuckled a little. 'Bring up the guns. . . Remember that picture we saw before we joined, Duncan? And we fancied then we'd be bringing 'em up same fashion. And, good Lord, think of to-night.'

'Yes,' grunted Duncan, 'sad slump from our anticipations. There was some fun in that picture style of doing the job—some sort of dash and honour and glory. No honour and glory about "Bring up the guns" these days. Na poo to-night anyway.'

The Sergeant-Major, sleepily sucking his damp cigarette, wrapped in his sopping British Warm, curling up in a corner on the wet cold earth, utterly spent with the night's work, cordially agreed.

Perhaps, and anyhow one hopes, some people will think they were wrong.

FRANCE AND BRITAIN: THEIR COMMON MEMORIES.

'France and England, whose very shores look pale
With envy of each other's happiness.'

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry V.*, Act v. sc. ii.

'Each the other's mystery, terror, need and love.'—RUDYARD KIPLING.

OUR common memories? Well, are they so many of this nature which brings closer those who recollect them together? They are indeed! Let this article be a friendly protest, a grounded protest against the idea which is no doubt, still, the prevalent popular idea on both sides of the Channel, I mean this one: 'The Entente Cordiale is something splendid, but when one comes to think about it, how wonderful, how new!' Yes, when we think about it *superficially*, how wonderful, how new, but when we think somewhat more deeply and with a little more knowledge of the past, how natural! Not a miracle: the logical result, only too long deferred, of the long centuries of our common history. It is not mere pastime to show it. How important on the contrary, how *practically* important for the present and for the future of our alliance, to make conscious again the old moral ties and to reawaken the sleeping sense of historical fellowship!

II.

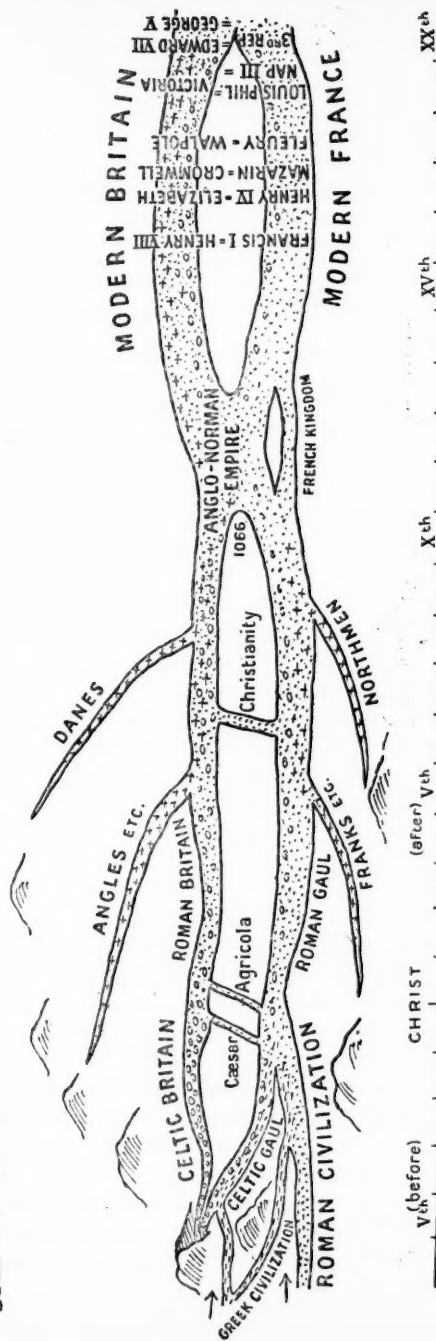
To make that fellowship apparent, at a glance, at least from certain points of view, I have devised the appended diagram. There you see represented, as it were, the streams of the history of our two nations from their farthest origins down to our own times. Please note the scale of centuries. See both streams rising about eight or six centuries before Christ in the same mountain—if I may say so figuratively—in the same mountain of the Celtic race. They spring, as you see, from the same source, and, though geographically divided, their waters remain a long time of the same colour—green in my draught.

We have, on that point of their origins, very interesting and very numerous testimonies, chiefly in the contemporary Greek and Roman writers. Very striking in particular was the fellowship

SYMBOLIC DRAUGHT ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY OF "FRANCO-BRITISH RELATIONS."

REFERENCE : *

- = Celtic elements.
- = Roman influence.
- ++++ = Northern elements.
- ||||| = Greek influence.



SCALE OF CENTURIES

* At my request the author has replaced colours by the above symbols, leaving it to the reader to understand where there is only mixture, and where fusion, of the elements.—Ed.

of ancient Britons and Gauls with regard to religion. If you open one—I may say any one—of our French history text-books, you will see that it begins exactly as one of yours, with the same story, and pictures, of Druids, priests, teachers, and judges—some of them bards; the same story of the solemn gathering of the mistletoe verdant in winter on the bare branches of oaks, symbol of the cardinal creed of the race: the immortality of the soul. Caesar, who had a Druid among his best friends, observes that the young Gauls who wanted to go deeper into the study of their religion generally used to go over to Britain in order to graduate, if I may say so, in this mysterious and lofty science.¹ It appears, therefore, that, though the Celts had passed originally from Gaul into Britain, yet Britain had become and remained the sanctuary of their common religion. Note that nothing of the sort was to be found elsewhere. Here we have characteristics of ancient Britain and ancient Gaul and of them alone. Now observe that though this Celtic colour is to be later on—in fact much later—modified by waters from other sources, yet it will never completely disappear. The Celtic element remains visible to our day in our two nations: you have your green Celtic fringe in Cornwall, Wales, part of Scotland, and the greater part of Ireland;—we have something of the kind in Brittany.

III.

During the first century B.C. a very big event took place which was to stamp the whole of our ulterior history on this side of the Channel with its principal character: I am referring to the Romanisation of Gaul.

For many reasons which I omit, the advent of the Romans, though of course it met with some strenuous and even splendid resistance for a short time, could hardly be called a conquest in the odious meaning of the word. Now, you know that Caesar in the very midst of his campaigns in Gaul found time to carry out two bold expeditions into Britain. It is very interesting to note his motives. He was not, as one could easily imagine, impelled by an appetite of conquest. This appetite, by the way, was much less among the Romans than is generally imagined, and Caesar himself had enough to do at that time with the turbulent Gallic tribes without entering, if it could be avoided, upon a doubtful enterprise beyond the

¹ Caesar, *B.G.* vi. 13.

Channel. But he could not do otherwise, and he gives us himself his motives, which are extremely interesting from the point of view of the history of our early relations. He felt that he could not see an end to his Gallic war if he did not at least intimidate the British brothers of the Gauls always ready to send them help ! Let me quote his own words (remember that he speaks of himself in the third person) :

‘ Though not much was left of the fine season—and winter comes early in those parts—he resolved to pass into Britain, at least, to begin with, for a reconnoitring raid, because he saw well that in almost all their wars (the Romans’ wars) with the Gauls, help came from that country to their enemies.’¹

His two bold raids into Britain had some of the desired effect. His successors achieved more, leisurely, without too much trouble, but very incompletely too, both as regards extent of territory and depth of impression. You see how I have expressed all this in my draught.

In Gaul, on the contrary, the transformation was complete and lasting, lasting to our days. The civilisation of Rome, which had already fascinated Gaul from afar, was so eagerly and so unanimously adopted all over the country that, in the space of a few decades, this country was nearly as Roman as Rome. The fame of the Gallo-Roman schools, the great number of Latin writers and orators of Gallic origin, the numberless remains of theatres, temples, bridges, aqueducts—some in marvellous state of preservation—which are even now to be found in hundreds of places, not only in the south but even in the north of this country, from the Mediterranean to the Rhine, and still more than anything else our language, so purely Romanic, abundantly testify to the willingness, nay to the enthusiasm, with which Gaul made her own the civilisation of Rome.

But why do I insist on this fact ? Because much of all this we were to transmit to you later on, chiefly on the Norman vehicle. The direct impression of Rome on your country was to remain superficial—though it would be a mistake to overlook it altogether—but the indirect influence through us was nearly to balance any other influence and to become one of the chief factors of your moral and intellectual history.

¹ Caesar, *B.G.* iv. 20.

IV.

But before we reach that time we have to take note of two nearly simultaneous events. In the fifth century the Franks established themselves in Roman Gaul and the Angles and Saxons in Roman Britain. You see in my draught each of these rivers—English and Frankish—flowing respectively into the streams of British and Gallic history. I have given about the same bluish colour to these new rivers to point out that Anglo-Saxons and Franks were originally cousins and neighbours. Their establishment was more or less attended with some rough handling, but even in their case, and chiefly in our case, the strict propriety of the word conquest to describe their coming can be questioned. There had been previous and partial agreements with the old people to come over, besides they were few in numbers. Yet the results were strikingly different. On our side the Franks were gradually absorbed, though giving their name to the country—France—and constituting, specially in the north, a small aristocracy of soldiers. On your side, on the contrary, the Anglo-Saxons converted the old country into a new one. Instead of giving up their own language they imposed it, at least to a large extent. Between them and their Frankish cousins established in old Roman Gaul relations remained quite cordial. A king of Kent, who had married a Christian daughter of a king of Paris, showed remarkable good will for the second introduction of Christianity into Britain. He and his Anglo-Saxon comrades would not accept Christianity from the ancient Britons who had already become Christian, more or less, under the Romans, but they accepted it eagerly at the recommendation of the Romanised and Christianised Franks. May I say that the Franks went so far as to provide the Mission under Augustine with the necessary interpreters! Very soon the Anglo-Saxons became so eager themselves for Christianity that they became foremost in the spreading of it to the last country which remained to be converted to the new faith, I mean Germany. This is a very interesting story, though an old one, and, I am afraid, much forgotten: your Winfrid—he and his pupils—with the recommendation and support of Charles Martel—the founder of our Carolingian dynasty—Christianising Germany, founding there a dozen bishoprics, with British bishops, becoming himself the first archbishop of Mayence, and then dying a martyr on German soil. . . . Is not it interesting, this now forgotten story, in which

we see early England and early France friendly co-operating to Christianise and to civilise Germany ?

V.

The next stage in the history of both countries was again analogous. About the same time—the ninth century—we, and you, had troubles from the same people : the Northmen. They were few in numbers, but gave much annoyance for some time. The result was the same on both sides : you practically turned your Northmen into Anglo-Saxons, and we turned ours into Romanised Frenchmen of the best sort. The process was much more rapidly completed on our side than on yours, and you were still engaged in it when our Romanised Normans arrived in Britain and nearly succeeded in achieving what the Romans themselves had failed to achieve. And more than that—more from the point of view of our relations—they very nearly succeeded in building out of our two countries a practically unified but short-lived empire.

In 1180 the whole of the present United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and nearly two-thirds of France were practically acknowledging, under one title or another, only one sovereign : Henry II. Plantagenet. Let me say—though I own it is not the view which is generally prevalent in our schools, and far from it!—that it is a pity they did not succeed altogether ! Henry II. had against him untoward circumstances and, above all, Philip Augustus ! He had finally to give up that fine dream. Now, union failing to be achieved that way, it is a pity,*I think, that it failed also the *other* way, a little time after in 1216. Then the far greater part of your people, barons and clergy, revolting against one of the unworthiest rulers ever known, King John, agreed to invite over the eldest son, *and heir*, of the French king to be their own king. He came over, of course, was received at Westminster, accepted and confirmed Magna Charta, the charter of your liberties, and was going to be acknowledged in all parts of the kingdom when John—allow me these strong terms—did the stupidest and wickedest thing of his stupid and wicked life by dying at the wrong time ! at that time ! He died when by living a little longer he might have been the occasion of joining our two countries into one empire ! Fancy for a moment what *this* would have meant, the course our common history would have taken for our common glory and the future of the whole human race ! But, dying, he left an heir, a

boy of nine years of age, and the idea of innocent legitimacy, with the strenuous support of the Papal legate, prevailed over the half-accomplished fact! And thus this splendid chance was lost!

Another occasion presented itself hardly more than a century afterwards, when the Capetian line of our own kings became extinct and the nearest heir was the English king Edward III. In fact, he was as much French as English, and the king of a country whose official language was still French and whose popular language was now permeated with French. I think it was no more difficult for France, in 1328, to accept this king, and be united with England under the same sovereign while remaining herself, than for England in 1603 to accept a king from Scotland. Well, there was some hesitation among the French barons and clergy, and a solemn discussion was held on the point of law. In fact, there was no law at all on the subject and they had a free choice. To my mind the interest of the country pointed to the recognition of Edward, that is to union. No doubt, on the other hand, that it was the way pointed to by civil and by canon laws. They preferred the other course. No doubt they meant well, but to be well-meaning and far-seeing are two things, and I for one, in the teeth of all adverse and orthodox teaching, lament the decision which they took and the turn which they gave to national feelings yet in their infancy. The other decision would have spared the two countries not only one, but several hundred years' wars, and would have secured to the two sister countries all the mutual advantages of peaceful development and cordial co-operation.

I can only briefly refer to the famous Treaty of Troyes, 1420, by which in the course of the Hundred Years' War our King—insane literally speaking—and his German wife, disinherited their son to the profit of their son-in-law, the English king, and handed over to him, at once, as Regent, the crown of France. This treaty of course, under such circumstances, and when national feelings had been roused—however unfortunately—in the contrary direction, had little moral and political value. Yet, had your Henry V. lived—he died two years after the treaty—he might possibly have got it accepted by France. Professor A. Coville in his contribution to what is presently the latest, the leading, history of France, commenting on Henry's love of justice and the stern discipline he maintained in his army—the Army of Agincourt—concludes in the following remarkable terms, which I beg to translate :

'After so many years of strife the people of this Kingdom [the French Kingdom] looked up to his stern government to turn this anarchy into order. Paris accepted as a deliverance this yoke, heavy no doubt but protective.'¹

It is interesting to observe that this view of this French historian is in complete agreement with Shakespeare's 'Henry V.' Such an agreement between an English poet and a French scientist is certainly worthy of attention !

Well, Henry V. died, and national feelings being decidedly roused, flaming into the stupendous miracle of Joan of Arc, decided otherwise.

VI.

What about this *otherwise*, I mean this definitive political separation and these centuries of hostility which fill our history text-books ? We can speak of it without the slightest uneasiness, not only because all this seems now to be so far in the past, a past which can never revive, but, above all, because of the remarkable characters of this hostility and of its brilliant interludes.

I say that this hostility had, on the whole, this remarkable character, to be lofty rivalry, not low hatred. It may have been—it was indeed at times—fierce and passionate, but it was all along accompanied by mutual respect. Our two countries aimed at surpassing much more than at destroying each other. It was more like a world race for glory than a grip for death. Its spirit was quarrelsome animosity taking immense delight in stupid pin-pricks and daring strokes, not cold hate dreaming of mortal stabs to the heart.

Your great poet Rudyard Kipling has expressed this very finely in the poem he wrote three years ago on the occasion, if I remember well, of your King's first visit to Paris. Let me quote from this poem :

'We stormed the seas tack for tack and burst
Through the doorways of new worlds, doubtful which was first.'

'Ask the wave that has not watched war between us two . . .
Each the other's mystery, terror, need, and love.'

'O companion, we have lived greatly through all time.'

¹ See *Histoire de France* publiée sous la direction de Mr. Lavisse : Tome IV. par A. Coville, Recteur de l'Académie de Clermont-Ferrand, Professeur honoraire de l'Université de Lyon.

I could illustrate this spirit by many stories. One of the most typical is about the encounter on the battlefield of Fontenoy, in 1745, of the massive English column and of the French centre. There is in that story a mixture of fine legend and historical truth, but anyway it is illustrative of the spirit. The very fact that the legend could grow out of the truth is a proof of the spirit by itself.

There is another story much less known, but which is as much illuminating. It was at the beginning of the American war, thirty-four years after Fontenoy, in 1779. Your famous seaman Rodney was in Paris, which he could not leave on account of certain debts, yet he was perfectly free to walk about as any ordinary private man, though France and England were at war. Concentration camps had not been invented as yet! One day, then, as he was dining with some French military friends—always remember, please, that we were at war—they came to talk of some recent successes we had just had at sea, among them the conquest of Grenada in the West Indies. Rodney expressed himself on these successes with polited disdain, saying that if *he* was free—he Rodney—the French would not have it so easy! Upon which old Marshal de Biron paid for his debts and said: 'You are free, sir, the French will not avail themselves of the obstacles which prevent you from fighting them.' Well, it cost us very dear to have let him go, but was not it fine!

I am glad to hear from my friend, your Oxford countryman, Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher, the author of a brilliantly written 'Introductory History of England' in four volumes, that the story is told in substantially the same terms on your side, by all the authorities on the subject: Mundy's 'Life and Correspondence of Lord Rodney' (vol. i. p. 180); Laughton in the 'Dictionary of National Biography'; Captain Mahan in his 'Influence of Sea Power in History,' p. 377.

We could tell many, many stories of that kind, but let these two be sufficient for our purpose to-day. And yet, even with all these extenuating circumstances, how pitiful it would have been if this enmity had been continuous! But it was not, and even far from it! Even the worst of all our wars, the Hundred Years' War, was interrupted by very numerous and very long truces lasting years and even decades of years! In fact, that war consisted generally of mere raids with handfuls of men, though it must be said that they often did harm out of all proportion to their numbers. As to the other wars in more modern times they were pleasantly intermingled

with interludes of co-operation and alliance. The simple enumeration of them is instructive and may even appear surprising.

In the sixteenth century there was a temporary alliance between your Henry VIII. and our Francis the First, against the Emperor of Germany, Charles V. In fact Henry VIII., at first, had allied himself with the German Emperor against the French king, but when the latter, attacked from all cardinal points (Spain and most of Italy were then in the hands of the Emperor), had been beaten at Pavia and taken prisoner to Madrid, your King perceived his mistake, *i.e.* England's ultimate danger. He consequently offered his alliance to Francis for the restoration of this balance of power, which, for want of something better, was the guarantee of the independence of all states. In Mignet's study¹ of these times I find this extract from your King's instructions to his ambassadors in France, in March 1526, as to the conditions forced upon the French king, in his Spanish prison, by the Emperor of Germany :

'They [the English ambassadors] shall infer what damage the crown of France may and is likely to stand in by the said conditions—this be the way to bring him [Charles] to the monarchy of Christendom.'

You know that, after all, the world-wide ambition of the then Emperor of Germany was defeated, to the point that he resigned in despair and ended his life in a monastery.

Again, towards the end of the same century Queen Elizabeth was on quite friendly terms with our Henry the Fourth. They had the same enemy : Philip the Second of Spain, son of Charles the Fifth and heir to the greater part of his dominions. This friendship ripened into alliance, and there was a very strong English contingent in the French army which retook Amiens, from the Spaniards, in 1597. Both sovereigns united also in helping the Low Countries in their struggle for independence against Spain.

In the seventeenth century your Cromwell and our Mazarin renewed the same alliance against Spain, and in 1657 a Franco-British army under the ablest of the French soldiers of that time, Marshal Turenne, beat the Spaniards near Dunkirk and took Dunkirk itself, which was handed over to you as the price previously agreed upon of the alliance.

After the Restoration your Stuarts were on so friendly terms with the French Government that they were accused, sometimes

Mignet, *Rivalité de François 1^{er} et de Charles-Quint*, II. ch. ix.

with some show of justice, of forgetting the national interests. There is no doubt that they tried, and to a certain extent successfully, to evade the just demands and control of your Parliament by becoming pensioners of the King of France. Their selling Dunkirk to France in 1662, five years after its capture from Spain, made them particularly unpopular. Of course, when they were finally expelled by your revolutions of 1688, they found, with hundreds of followers, a hospitable reception at the French court, causing thereby on the other hand a revival of hostility between our government and your new one. May I observe, by the way, that the head of this new government of yours was the Prince of Orange—French Orange, near Avignon—and that this little, practically self-governing principality was suffered to remain his until his death, in 1702, when Louis XIV. annexed it to France ?

In the eighteenth century itself, marked by so keen a rivalry, there were temporary periods of understanding, specially during the two or three decades following the peace of Utrecht, with a view of preserving the peace of Europe. The names of Sir Robert Walpole and Cardinal Fleury are attached to this period.

In the nineteenth century, from the fall of Napoleon, the improvement of our relations—down to the present day—has been nearly continuous and marked by a series of remarkable facts. It was first the union of our navies, with that of Russia, for the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Navarino, in 1827, thereby securing the independence of Greece—an independence which was completed in the ensuing years by French and Russian armies—(we wish the present Greek Government, the Royal government, remembered this better !). It was then the union of our policies for the liberation of Belgium from Dutch vassalage, a liberation which Prussia wanted to oppose but durst not, seeing that France and England had made up their minds about it. Then came the union of our armies for the mistaken object of protecting Turkey against Russia (how strange it sounds now !), or of opening China to the European trade. Chief of all, how could we forget that—some way or other—France and Britain have been godmothers to Italian unity !

Well, all this is rather a long record and it may appear surprising to many as an aggregate, though nearly each component part of it is well known ! The reason for this impression of surprise is this : in spite of this political co-operation, and side by side with it, much of the acrimonious spirit long survived, unwilling to die.

The twentieth century, thank God ! and the present alliance have given it the ' coup de grâce ' !

VII.

I have adverted until now to the political side only of our relations, but if we look at our past relations from another standpoint—the standpoint of the mind, of moral progress, of civilisation—we have a somewhat simpler story to tell, yet a chequered story too. Whatever our political relations may have been—with perhaps the only exception of the time when you opposed all reforms, because we were making revolutionary, disconcerting reforms !—we have been generally emulating for all that ennobles the life of man : higher thought, justice, and liberty. There is here such a formidable accumulation of interesting facts that I can scarcely refer to them except in very general terms, lest I should lose sight of the limits within which I must compress this article.

French and English writers rarely took much account of the political hostility which prevailed between the two countries. Your writers have generally paid, from Chaucer's time down to our own, the closest attention to our literature, whether they have followed its lead or reacted against its influence. On the other hand, all our political philosophers have always found in the study of your institutions a source of inexhaustible interest, whether they have been admirers of them like Montesquieu or sharp critics like Rousseau. And let no one imagine that this side of the question is devoid of practical interest. It is owing to this continuous interchange of ideas that both countries have been equipped for these intellectual, moral and political achievements by which, in spite of all their shortcomings, they have won the glory of being generally acknowledged, on so many points, as the joint leaders of modern civilisation. It is the fact that they have been more or less conscious all along, or nearly so, of this joint leadership, which has so happily counteracted and at the end got the better of political acrimony and popular prejudices. The *Entente Cordiale* between our two countries is largely a triumph of the mind, the finest in history and certainly the most far-reaching. Let us not underestimate therefore the influence of intellectual workers. It has been the glory of most of them in this country and in yours to plead for the noblest ideals : for liberty and justice at home, and also, abroad, for a cordial understanding of all nations, for

harmony between national interests and the rights of humanity. In modern Germany, on the contrary, most of those who are supposed to be the representatives of the mind have not been ashamed of ministering, long before this war, to the brutal appetites of a feudal and military caste by spreading among their own people a monstrous belief in the divine right of the German race to oppress all the world. The best of them, with extremely rare exceptions, have done nothing to oppose this dangerous fanaticism and to maintain the nobler traditions of German thought. Both instances therefore, ours and theirs—I mean French and British intellectual history on one side, German later intellectual history on the other side—sufficiently illustrate the power of spiritual factors for good or for evil. The only thing to be deplored in our case is that our Entente was so long deferred. Things would have turned otherwise if our Entente had ripened somewhat earlier into a closer association, gradually extending by a moral attraction to all peace-loving nations. Had it been so who would have dared to attack them? At least let the bitter lesson be turned to account for the future!

And chief of all let us think of the new chapter of our common history. There is being written on the banks and hills of the Somme such a chapter of our common history as will live eternally in the souls of Britons and Frenchmen. Let the memory of it, added to all those I have recounted, bind together in eternal alliance the hearts and the wills of the two nations. Let it be known to all the world that this present alliance is not like so many of the past a temporary combination of governments, but the unanimous and forever fixed will of both nations as the crowning and *logical* conclusion of their glorious history. Let this close and intimate association include all our noble allies, and all such nations as may be worthy to join it; let it become the Grand Alliance, the only one really and completely deserving of this name, to which it will have been reserved to establish, at last, the reign of Right and Peace on earth.

GASTON E. BROCHE.

OLD WAYS AT WESTMINSTER.

RECALLED BY SIR HENRY LUCY.

To the July number of CORNHILL I last year contributed an article gleaned from the Recollections of an anonymous observer of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of the session of 1835. It contained a series of thumb-nail personal sketches of eminent members long since gone to 'another place,' leaving names that will live in English history. A portion of the musty volume was devoted to descriptions of Parliamentary surroundings and procedure interesting by comparison with those established at the present day.

'Q,' as for brevity I name the unknown recorder, describes the old House of Commons destroyed by fire in 1834 as dark, gloomy and badly ventilated, so small that not more than 400 out of the 658 members could be accommodated with any measure of comfort. In those days an important debate was not unfrequently preceded by 'a call of the House,' which brought together a full muster. On such occasions members were, 'Q' says, 'literally crammed together,' the heat of the House recalling accounts of the then recent tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Immediately over the entrance provided for members was the Strangers' Gallery; underneath it were several rows of seats for friends of members. This arrangement exists in the new House. Admission to the Strangers' Gallery was obtained on presentation of a note or order from a member. Failing that, the payment of half a crown to the doorkeeper at once procured admittance.

When the General Election of 1880 brought the Liberals into power, parties in the House of Commons, in obedience to immemorial custom, crossed over, changing sides. The Irish members, habitually associated with British Liberals, having when in Opposition shared with them the benches to the left of the Speaker, on this occasion declined to change their quarters, a decision ever since observed. They were, they said, free from allegiance to either political party and would remain uninfluenced by their movements. This was noted at the time as a new departure. Actually they were following a precedent established half a century earlier.

In the closing sessions of the unreformed Parliament, a group of extreme Radicals, including Hume, Cobbett and Roebuck, remained seated on the Opposition Benches whichever party was in power. Prominent amongst them was Hume, above all others most constant in attendance. He did not quit his post even during the dinner hour. He filled his pockets with fruit—pears by preference—and at approach of eight o'clock publicly ate them.

In the old House of Commons a bench at the back of the Strangers' Gallery was by special favour appropriated to the reporters. The papers represented paid the doorkeepers a fee of three guineas a session. As they numbered something over threescore this was a source of snug revenue in supplement to the strangers' tributary half-crown. Ladies were not admitted to the Strangers' Gallery. The only place whence they could partly see, and imperfectly hear, what was going on was by looking down through a large hole in the ceiling immediately above the principal candle-stocked chandelier. This aperture was the principal means of ventilating the House, and the ladies circled round it regardless of the egress of vitiated air. Mr. Gladstone, who sat in the old House as member for Newark, once told me that during progress with an important debate he saw a fan fluttering down from the ceiling. It had dropped from the hand of one of the ladies, who suddenly found herself in a semi-asphyxiated condition. Something more than half a century later Mr. Gladstone was unconsciously the object of attention from another group of ladies indomitable in desire to hear an historic speech. On the night of the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill there was overflowing demand for seats in the Ladies' Gallery. When accommodation was exhausted, the wife of the First Commissioner of Works happily remembered that the floor of the House is constructed of open iron network, over which a twine matting is laid. These cover the elaborate machinery by which fresh air is constantly let into the Chamber, escaping by apertures near the ceiling. Standing or walking along the Iron Gallery that spans the vault, it is quite easy to hear what is going on in the House. Here, on the invitation of the First Commissioner's wife, were seated a company of ladies who, unseen, their presence unsuspected, heard every word of the Premier's epoch-making speech.

'Q' incidentally records details of procedure in marked contrast with that of to-day. In these times, on the assembling of a newly elected Parliament, the Oath is administered by the Clerk to mem-

bers standing in batches at small tables on the floor of the House. In the old Parliament, members were sworn in by the Lord Steward of His Majesty's Household. At the same period a new Speaker being duly elected or re-elected was led by the Mover and Seconder from his seat to the Bar, whence he was escorted to the Chair. To-day he is conducted direct to the Chair. When divisions were taken in Committee of the whole House, members did not, as at present, go forth into separate lobbies. The 'ayes' ranged themselves to the right of the Speaker's Chair, the 'noes' to the left, and were counted accordingly. The practice varied when the House was fully constituted, the Speaker in the Chair and the Mace on the Table. In such circumstances one only of the contending parties, the 'ayes' or the 'noes' according to the nature of the business in question, quitted the Chamber. The tellers first counted those remaining in the House, and then, standing in the passage between the Bar and the door, counted the others as they re-entered. The result of the division was announced in the formula: 'The ayes that went out are' so many. 'The noes who remained are' so many, or otherwise according to the disposition of the opposing forces. A quorum then as now was forty, but when the House was in Committee the presence of eight members sufficed. 'Q' makes no reference to the use of a bell announcing divisions. But he mentions occasions on which the Mace was sent to Westminster Hall, the Court of Request, or to the several Committee Rooms to summon members to attend.

At the period of Parliamentary history of which 'Q' is the lively chronicler, the ceremony of choosing a Speaker and obtaining Royal Assent to the choice was identical with that first used on the occasion of Sir Job Charlton's election to the Chair in the time of Charles II. The title of Speaker was bestowed because he alone had the right to speak to or address the King in the name and on behalf of the House of Commons. Of this privilege he customarily availed himself at considerable length. On being summoned to the presence of the Sovereign in the House of Lords he, in servile terms, begged to be excused from undertaking the duties of Speaker, 'which,' he protested, 'require greater abilities than I can pretend to own.' The Lord Chancellor, by direction of the Sovereign, assured the modest man that 'having very attentively heard your discreet and handsome discourse,' the King would not consent to refusal of the Chair. Thereupon the Speaker-designate launched forth into a fresh, even more ornate, address, claiming

'renewal of the ancient privileges of Your most loyal and dutiful House of Commons.' Whereunto His Majesty, speaking again by the mouth of the Lord Chancellor, remarked, not without a sense of humour, that 'he hath heard and well weighed your short and eloquent oration and in the first place much approves that you have introduced a shorter way of speaking on these occasions.'

Up to 1883 the Speaker's salary was, as it is to-day, £5000 a year. In addition to his salary he received fees amounting to £2000 or £3000 per session. On his election he was presented with 2000 ounces of plate, £1000 of equipment money, two hogsheads of claret, £100 per annum for stationery, and a stately residence in convenient contiguity to the House. These little extras made the post worth at least £8000 per annum.

In the present and recent Parliament an ancient tradition is kept up by a member for the City of London seating himself on the Treasury Bench. Two members are privileged to take their places there, but after his election for the City Mr. Arthur Balfour left Sir Frederick Banbury in sole possession of the place. To-day, by the strange derangement of party ties consequent on the war, the ex-Prime Minister has permanently shifted his quarters to the Treasury Bench under the leadership of a Radical Premier. In the first third of the nineteenth century the City of London returned four members, who not only sat on the Treasury Bench on the opening day of the new Parliament, but arrayed themselves in scarlet gowns. Sir Frederick Banbury stopped short of acquiring that distinction.

During the first two sessions of the reformed Parliament the Commons met at noon for the purpose of presenting petitions and transacting other business of minor importance. These morning sittings, precursors of others instituted by Disraeli and since abandoned, usually lasted till three o'clock, the House then adjourning till five, when real business was entered upon. Subsequently this arrangement was abandoned, the Speaker taking the Chair at half-past three. Even then the first and freshest hour and a half of the sitting were spent in the presentation of petitions or in debate thereupon. The interval can be explained only upon the assumption that the petitions were read verbatim.

In the Parliamentary procedure of to-day petitions play a part of ever decreasing importance. Their presentation takes precedence of all other business. But the member in charge of one is not permitted to stray beyond briefest description of its prayer and a

statement of the number of signatories. Thereupon, by direction of the Speaker, he thrusts the petition into a sack hanging to the left of the Speaker's chair, and there an end on't. There is, it is true, a Committee of Petitions which is supposed to examine every document. As far as practical purposes are concerned, petitions might as well be dropped over the Terrace into the Thames as into the mouth of the appointed sack.

At times of popular excitement round a vexed question—by preference connected with the Church, the sale of liquor, or, before her ghost was laid, marriage with the deceased wife's sister—the flame systematically fanned is kept burning by the presentation of monster petitions. Amid ironical cheers these are carried in by two elderly messengers, who lay them at the foot of the Table. Having been formally presented, they are, amid renewed merriment, carried forth again and nothing more is heard of them, unless the Committee on Petitions reports that there is suspicious similarity in the handwriting of blocks of signatures, collected by an energetic person remunerated by commission upon the aggregate number.

The most remarkable demonstration made in modern times happened during the short life of the Parliament elected in 1892. Members coming down in time for prayers discovered to their amazement the floor of the House blocked with monster rolls, such as are seen in the street when the repair of underground telegraph wires is in progress. The member to whose personal care this trifle had been submitted rising to present the petition, Mr. Labouchere, on a point of order, objected that sight of him was blocked by the gigantic cylinders. 'The hon. gentleman,' he suggested, 'should mount one and address the Chair from the eminence.' The suggestion was disregarded, and in time the elderly messengers put their shoulders to wheels and rolled the monsters out of the House.

'Q,' whose eagle eye nothing escapes, comments on the preponderance of bald heads among Ministers. Occupying an idle moment, he counted the number of bald heads and found them to amount to one-third of the full muster. 'Taking the whole 658,' he writes in one of his simple but delightful asides, 'I should think that perhaps a fourth part are more or less baldheaded. The number of red heads,' he adds, 'is also remarkable. I should think they are hardly less numerous than bald ones. When I come to advert to individual members of distinction it cannot fail to strike the reader how many are red-headed.'

This interesting inference is, if it be accepted as well-founded, damaging to the status of the present House of Commons. I do not, on reflection, recall a single member so decorated.

As to baldheadedness—which in the time of the prophet Elisha was regarded as an undesirable eccentricity, public notice of which, it will be remembered, condemned the commentators to severe disciplinary punishment—it was, curiously enough, a marked peculiarity among members of the House of Commons in an early decade of the nineteenth century. I have a prized engraving presenting a view of the interior of the House of Commons during the sessions of 1821–3. Glancing over the crowded benches, I observe that the proportion of baldheaded men is at least equal to that noted by 'Q' in the Parliament sitting a dozen years later.

What are known as scenes in the House were not infrequent in 'Q's' time. He recalls one in which an otherwise undistinguished member for Oxford, one Hughes Hughes, was made the butt. It was a flash of the peculiar, not always explicable, humour of the House of Commons, still upon occasion predominant, to refuse a gentleman a hearing. 'Hughes's rising was the signal for continuous uproar,' 'Q' writes. 'At repeated intervals a sort of drone-like drumming, having the sound of a distant hand organ or bagpipes, arose from the back benches. Coughing, sneezing and ingeniously extended yawning blended with other sounds. A voice from the Ministerial benches imitated very accurately the yelp of a kennelled hound.'

For ten minutes the double-barrelled Hughes faced the music, and when he sat down not a word save the initial 'Sir' had been heard from his lips.

The nearest approach to this scene I remember happened in the last session of the Parliament of 1868–74, when, amidst similar uproar, Cavendish Bentinck, as one describing at the time the uproar wrote, 'went out behind the Speaker's Chair and crowed thrice.' This was the occasion upon which Sir Charles Dilke made his Parliamentary début. In Committee of Ways and Means he, in uncompromising fashion that grated on the ears of loyalists, called attention to the Civil List of Queen Victoria and moved a reduction. Auberon Herbert, now a staid Tory, at that time suspected of a tendency towards Republicanism, undertook to second the amendment. Sir Charles managed amid angry interruptions to work off his speech. Herbert, following him, was met by a storm of resentment that made his sentences inaudible.

After uproar had prevailed for a full quarter of an hour a shame-faced member, anxious for the dignity of the Mother of Parliaments, called attention to the presence of strangers. Forthwith, in accordance with the regulation then in force, the galleries were cleared. As the occupants of the Press Gallery reluctantly departed, they heard above the shouting the sound of cock-crowing. Looking over the baluster they saw behind the Chair Little Ben, as Cavendish Bentinck was called to distinguish him from his bigger kinsman, vigorously engaged upon a vain effort to preserve order by a passable imitation of Chanticleer saluting the happy morn.

From 'Q's' report of another outbreak of disorder it would appear that in the House meeting in the 'thirties of the nineteenth century, exchange of personalities went far beyond modern experience. The once heated Maynooth question was to the fore. In the course of an animated set-to between a Mr. Shaw and Daniel O'Connell, the former shouted 'The Hon. Member has charged me with being actuated by spiritual ferocity. My ferocity is not of the description which takes for its symbol a death's head and cross bones.' O'Connell, as a certain fishwife locally famous for picturesque language discovered, was hard to beat in the game of vituperation. Turning upon Shaw, he retorted 'Yours is a calf's head and jaw bones.'

'Q' records that the retort was greeted with deafening cheers from the Ministerial side where O'Connell and his party were seated. Mr. Shaw's polite, but perhaps inconsequential, remark had been received with equal enthusiasm by the Opposition.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

BY BENNET COPPLESTONE.

'CAESAR,' said a Sub-lieutenant to his friend, a temporary Lieutenant R.N.V.R., who at the outbreak of war had been a classical scholar at Oxford, 'you were in the thick of our scrap yonder off the Jutland coast. You were in it every blessed minute with the battle cruisers, and must have had a lovely time. Did you ever, Caesar, try to write the story of it?'

It was early in June of last year, and a group of officers had gathered near the ninth hole of an abominable golf course which they had themselves laid out upon an island in the great landlocked bay wherein reposed from their labours long lines of silent ships. It was a peaceful scene. Few even of the battleships showed the scars of battle, though among them were some which the Germans claimed to be at the bottom of the sea. There they lay, coaled, their magazines refilled, ready at short notice to issue forth with every eager man and boy standing at his action station. And while all waited for the next call, officers went ashore, keen, after the restrictions upon free exercise, to stretch their muscles upon the infamous golf course. It was, I suppose, one of the very worst courses in the world. There were no prepared tees, no fairway, no greens. But there was much bare rock, great tufts of coarse grass greedy of balls, wide stretches of hard, naked soil destructive of wooden clubs, and holes cut here and there of approximately the regulation size. Few officers of the Grand Fleet, except those in Beatty's Salt of the Earth squadrons, far to the south, had since the war began been privileged to play upon more gracious courses. But the Sea Service, which takes the rough with the smooth, with cheerful and profane philosophy, accepted the home-made links as a spirited triumph of the handy-man over forbidding nature.

'Yes,' said the naval volunteer, 'I tried many times, but gave up all attempts as hopeless. I came up here to get first-hand material, and have sacrificed my short battle leave to no purpose. The more I learn the more helplessly incapable I feel. I can describe the life of a ship, and make you people move and speak like live things. But a battle is too big for me. One might as well try to realise and set on paper the Day of Judgment. All I did was to

write a letter to an old friend, one Copplestone, beseeching him to make clear to the people at home what we really had done. I wrote it three days after the battle, but never sent it. Here it is.'

Lieutenant Caesar drew a paper from his pocket and read as follows :

'MY DEAR COPPLESTONE,—Picture to yourself our feelings. On Wednesday we were in the fiery hell of the greatest naval action ever fought. A real Battle of the Giants. Beatty's and Hood's battle cruisers—chaffingly known as the Salt of the Earth—and Evan Thomas's squadron of four fast Queen Elizabeths had fought for two hours the whole German High Seas Fleet. Beatty, in spite of his heavy losses, had outmanœuvred Fritz's battle cruisers and enveloped the German line. The Fifth Battle Squadron had stalled off the German Main Fleet, and led them into the net of Jellicoe, who, coming up, deployed between Evan Thomas and Beatty, though he could not see either, crossed the T of the Germans in the beautifullest of beautiful manœuvres, and had them for a moment as good as sunk. But the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away ; it is sometimes difficult to say Blessed be the Name of the Lord. For just when we most needed full visibility the mist came down thick, the light failed, and we were robbed of the fruits of victory when they were almost in our hands. It was hard, hard, bitterly hard. But we had done the utmost which the Fates permitted. The enemy, after being harried all night by destroyers, had got away home in torn rags, and we were left in supreme command of the North Sea, a command more complete and unchallengeable than at any moment since the war began. For Fritz had put out his full strength, all his unknown cards were on the table, we knew his strength and his weakness, and that he could not stand for a moment against our concentrated power. All this we had done, and rejoiced mightily. In the morning we picked up from Poldhu the German wireless claiming the battle as a glorious victory—at which we laughed loudly. But there was no laughter when in the afternoon Poldhu sent out an official message from our own Admiralty which, from its clumsy wording and apologetic tone, seemed actually to suggest that we had had the devil of a hiding. Then when we arrived at our bases came the newspapers with their talk of immense losses, and of bungling, and of the Grand Fleet's failure! Oh, it was a monstrous shame! The country which depends utterly upon us for life and honour, and had trusted us utterly, had been struck to the heart. We had come back glowing, exalted by the battle, full of admiration for the skill of our leaders and for the serene intrepidity of our men. We had seen our ships go

down and pay the price of sea command—pay it willingly and ungrudgingly as the Navy always pays. Nothing that the enemy had done or could do was able to hurt us, but we had been mortally wounded in the house of our friends. It will take days, weeks, perhaps months, for England and the world to be made to understand and to do us justice. Do what you can, old man. Don't delay a minute. Get busy. You know the Navy, and love it with your whole soul. Collect notes and diagrams from the scores of friends whom you have in the Service; they will talk to you and tell you everything. I can do little myself. A Naval Volunteer who fought through the action in a turret, looking after a pair of big guns, could not himself see anything outside his thick steel walls. Go ahead at once, do knots, and the fighting Navy will remember you in its prayers.'

The attention of others in the group had been drawn to the reader and his letter, and when Lieutenant Caesar stopped, flushed and out of breath, there came a chorus of approving laughter.

'This temporary gentleman is quite a literary character,' said a two-ring Lieutenant who had been in an exposed spotting top throughout the whole action, 'but we've made a Navy man of him since he joined. That's a dashed good letter, and I hope you sent it.'

'No,' said Caesar. 'While I was hesitating, wondering whether I would risk the lightning of the Higher Powers, a possible court martial, and the loss of my insecure wavy rings, the business was taken out of my hands by this same man to whom I was wanting to write. He got moving on his own account, and now, though the battle is only ten days old, the country knows the rights of what we did. When it comes to describing the battle itself, I make way for my betters. For what could I see? On the afternoon of May 31, we were doing gun drill in my turret. Suddenly came an order to put lyddite into the guns and follow the Control. During the next two hours as the battle developed we saw nothing. We were just parts of a big human machine intent upon working our own little bit with faultless accuracy. There was no leisure to think of anything but the job in hand. From beginning to end I had no suggestion of a thrill, for a naval action in a turret is just gun drill glorified, as I suppose it is meant to be. The enemy is not seen; even the explosions of the guns are scarcely heard. I never took my ear-protectors from their case in my pocket. All is quiet, organised labour, sometimes very hard labour when for any reason

one has to hoist the great shells by the hand purchase. It is extraordinary to think that I got fifty times more actual excitement out of a squadron regatta months ago than out of the greatest battle in naval history.'

'That's quite true,' said the Spotting Officer, 'and quite to be expected. Battleship fighting is not thrilling except for the very few. For nine-tenths of the officers and men it is a quiet, almost dull routine of exact duties. For some of us up in exposed positions in the spotting tops or on the signal bridge, with big shells banging on the armour or bursting alongside in the sea, it becomes mighty wetting and very prayerful. For the still fewer, the real fighters of the ship in the conning tower, it must be absorbingly interesting. But for the true blazing rapture of battle one has to go to the destroyers. In a battleship one lives like a gentleman until one is dead, and takes the deuce of a lot of killing. In a destroyer one lives rather like a pig, and one dies with extraordinary suddenness. Yet the destroyer officers and men have their reward in a battle, for then they drink deep of the wine of life. I would sooner any day take the risks of destroyer work, tremendous though they are, just for the fun which one gets out of it. It was great to see our boys round up Fritz's little lot. While you were in your turret, and the Sub. yonder in control of a side battery, Fritz massed his destroyers like Prussian infantry and tried to rush up close so as to strafe us with the torpedo. Before they could get fairly going, our destroyers dashed at them, broke up their masses, buffeted and hustled them about exactly like a pack of wolves worrying sheep, and with exactly the same result. Fritz's destroyers either clustered together like sheep or scattered flying to the four winds. It was just the same with the light cruisers as with the destroyers. Fritz could not stand against us for a moment, and could not get away, for we had the heels of him and the guns of him. There was a deadly slaughter of destroyers and light cruisers going on while we were firing our heavy stuff over their heads. Even if we had sunk no battle cruisers or battleships, the German High Seas Fleet would have been crippled for months by the destruction of its indispensable "cavalry screen."'

As the Spotting Officer spoke, a Lieutenant-Commander holed out on the last jungle with a mashie—no one uses a putter on the Grand Fleet's private golf course—and approached our group, who, while they talked, were busy over a picnic lunch.

'If you pigs haven't finished all the bully beef and hard tack,'

said he, 'perhaps you can spare a bite for one of the blooming heroes of the X Destroyer Flotilla.' The speaker was about twenty-seven, in rude health, and bore no sign of the nerve-racking strain through which he had passed for eighteen long-drawn hours. The young Navy is as unconscious of nerves as it is of indigestion. The Lieutenant-Commander, his hunger satisfied, lighted a pipe and joined in the talk.

'It was hot work,' said he, 'but great sport. We went in sixteen and came out a round dozen. If Fritz had known his business, I ought to be dead. He can shoot very well till he hears the shells screaming past his ears, and then his nerves go. Funny thing how wrong we've been about him. He is smart to look at, fights well in a crowd, but cracks when he has to act on his own without orders. When we charged his destroyers and ran right in he just crumpled to bits. We had a batch of him nicely herded up, and were laying him out in detail with guns and mouldies, when there came along a beastly intrusive Control Officer on a battle cruiser and took him out of our mouths. It was a sweet shot, though. Someone—I don't know his name, or he would hear of his deuced interference from me—plumped a salvo of twelve-inch common shell right into the brown of Fritz's huddled batch. Two or three of his destroyers went aloft in scrap-iron, and half a dozen others were disabled. After the first hour his destroyers and light cruisers ceased to be on the stage; they had flown quadrivious—there's an ormolu word for our classical volunteer—and we could have a whack at the big ships. Later, at night, it was fine. We ran right in upon Fritz's after-guard of sound battleships and rattled them most tremendous. He let fly at us with every bally gun he had, from four-inch to fourteen, and we were a very pretty mark under his searchlights. We ought to have been all laid out, but our loss was astonishingly small, and we strafed two of his heavy ships. Most of his shots went over us.'

'Yes,' called out the Spotting Officer, 'yes, they did, and ricocheted all round us in the Queen Elizabeths. There was the devil of a row. The firing in the main action was nothing to it. All the while you were charging, and our guns were masked for fear of hitting you, Fritz's bombons were screaming over our upper works and making us say our prayers out loud in the Spotting Tops. You'd have thought we were at church. I was in the devil of a funk, and could hear my teeth rattling. It is when one is fired on and can't hit back that one thinks of one's latter end.'

'Did any of you see the *Queen Mary* go?' asked a tall thin man with the three rings of a Commander. 'Our little lot saw nothing of the first part of the battle; we were with the K.G. Fives and Orions.'

'I saw her,' spoke a Gunnery Lieutenant, a small, quiet man with dreamy, introspective eyes—the eyes of a poet turned gunner. 'I saw her. She was hit forward, and went in five seconds. You all know how. It was a thing which won't bear talking about. The *Invincible* took a long time to sink, and was still floating bottom up when Jellicoe's little lot came in to feed after we and the Salt of the Earth had eaten up most of the dinner. I don't believe that half the Grand Fleet fired a shot.'

There came a savage growl from officers of the main Battle Squadrons, who, invited to a choice banquet, had seen it all cleared away before their arrival. 'That's all very well,' grumbled one of them; 'the four Q.E.s are getting a bit above themselves because they had the luck of the fair. They didn't fight the High Seas Fleet by their haughty selves because they wanted to, you bet.'

The Gunnery Lieutenant with the dreamy eyes smiled. 'We certainly shouldn't have chosen that day to fight them on. But if the *Queen Elizabeth* herself had been with us, and we had had full visibility—with the horizon a hard dark line—we would have willingly taken on all Fritz's twelve-inch Dreadnoughts and thrown in his battle cruisers.'

'That's the worst of it,' grumbled the Commander, very sore still at having tasted only of the skim milk of the battle; 'naval war is now only a matter of machines. The men don't count as they did in Nelson's day.'

'Excuse me, sir,' remarked the Sub-Lieutenant; 'may I say a word or two about that? I have been thinking it out.'

There came a general laugh. The Sub-Lieutenant, twenty years of age, small and dark and with the bright black eyes of his mother—a pretty little lady from the Midi de la France whom his father had met and married in Paris—did not look like a philosopher, but he had the clear-thinking, logical mind of his mother's people.

'Think aloud, my son,' said the Commander. 'As a living incarnation of l'Entente Cordiale, you are privileged above those others of the gun-room.'

The light in the Sub's eyes seemed to die out as his gaze turned inwards. He spoke slowly, carefully, sometimes injecting a word

from his mother's tongue which could better express his meaning. He looked all the while towards the sea, and seemed scarcely to be conscious of an audience of seniors. His last few sentences were spoken wholly in French.

'No—naval war is a war of men, as it always was and always will be. For what are the machines but the material expression of the souls of the men? Our ships are better and faster than the German ships, our guns heavier and more accurate than theirs, our gunners more deadly than their gunners, because our Navy has the greater human soul. The Royal Navy is not a collection of lifeless ships and guns imposed upon men by some external power as the Kaiser sought to impose a fleet upon the Germans, a nation of landmen. The Navy is only a matter of machines in so far as human beings can only achieve material ends by material means. I look upon the ships and guns as secreted by the men just as a tortoise secretes its shell. They are the products of naval thought, and naval brains, and, above all, of that ever-expanding naval soul (*l'esprit*) which has been growing for a thousand years. Our ships yonder are materially new, the products almost of yesterday, but really they are old, centuries old; they are the expression of a naval soul working, fermenting, always growing through the centuries, always seeking to express itself in machinery. Naval war is an art, the art of men, and where in the world will one find men like ours, officers like ours? Have you ever thought whence come those qualities which one sees glowing every day in our men, from the highest Admiral to the smallest ship boy—have you ever thought whence they come?'

He paused, still looking out to sea. His companions, all of them his superiors in rank and experience, stared at him in astonishment, and one or two laughed. But the Commander signalled for silence. 'Et après,' he asked quietly; 'd'où viennent ces qualités?' Unconsciously he had sloughed the current naval slang and spoke in the native language of the Sub.

The effect was not what he had expected. At the sound of the Commander's voice speaking in French the Sub-Lieutenant woke up, flushed, and instantly reverted to his English self. 'I am sorry, sir. I got speaking French, in which I always think, and when I talk French I talk the most frightful rot.'

'I am not so sure that it was rot. Your theory seems to be that we are, in the naval sense, the heirs of the ages, and that no nation that has not been through our centuries-old mill can hope to stand against us. I hope that you are right. It is a comforting theory.'

'But isn't that what we all think, sir, though we may not put it quite that way? Most of us know that our officers and men are of unapproachable stuff in body and mind, but we don't seek for a reason. We accept it as an axiom. I've tried to reason the thing out because I'm half French; and also because I've been brought up among dogs and horses and believe thoroughly in heredity. It's all a matter of breeding.'

'The Sub's right,' broke in the Gunnery Lieutenant with the poet's eyes; 'though a Sub who six months ago was a snotty has no business to think of anything outside his duty. The Service would go to the devil if the gun-room began to talk psychology. We excuse it in this Sub here for the sake of the *Entente Cordiale*, of which he is the living embodiment; but had any other jawed at us in that style I would have sat upon his head. Of course he is right, though it isn't our English way to see through things and define them as the French do. No race on earth can touch us for horses or dogs or prize cattle—or Navy men. It takes centuries to breed the boys who ran submarines through the Dardanelles and the Sound and stayed out in narrow enemy waters for weeks together. Brains and nerves and sea skill can't be made to order even by a German Kaiser. Navy men should marry young and choose their women from sea families, and then their kids won't need to be taught. They'll have the secret of the Service in their blood.'

'That's all very fine,' observed a Marine Lieutenant reflectively; 'but who is going to pay for it all? We can't. I get 7s. 6d. a day, and shall have 11s. in a year or two; it sounds handsome, but would hardly run to a family. Few in the Navy have any private money, so how can we marry early?'

'Of course we can't as things go now,' said the Gunnery Lieutenant. 'But some day even the Admiralty will discover that the English Navy will become a mere list of useless machines unless the English naval families can be kept up on the lower deck as well as in the ward-room and gun-room. Why, look at the names of our submarine officers whenever they get into the papers for honours. They are always salt of the sea, names which have been in the Navy List ever since there was a List. You may read the same names in the Trafalgar roll and back to the Dutch wars. Most of us were Pongos before that—shore Pongos who went afloat with Blake or Prince Rupert—but then we became sailors, and so remained, father to son. I can only go back myself to the Glorious First of June, but some of us here in the Grand Fleet date from the Stuarts at least. It is jolly fine to be of Navy blood, but not all

plum jam. One has such a devil of a record to live up to. In my term at Dartmouth there was a poor little beast called Francis Drake—a real Devon Drake, a genuine antique—but what a load of a name to carry ! Thank God, my humble name doesn't shine out of the history books. And as with the officers, so with the seamen. Half of them come from my own county of Devon—the cradle of the Navy. They are in the direct line from Drake's buccaneers. Most of the others come from the ancient maritime counties of the Channel seaboard, where the blood of everyone tingles with Navy salt. The Germans can build ships which are more or less accurate copies of our own, but they can't breed the men. That is the whole secret.'

The Lieutenant-Commander, whose war-scarred destroyer lay below refitting, laughed gently. 'There is a lot in all that, more than we often realise when we grumble at the cursed obstinacy of our old ratings, but even you do not go back far enough. It is the old blood of the Vikings and sea-pirates in us English which makes us turn to the sea ; the rest is training. In no other way can you explain the success of the Fringes, the mine-sweepers, and patrols, most of them manned by naval volunteers who, before the war, had never served under the White Ensign nor seen a shot fired. What is our classical scholar here, Caesar, but a naval volunteer whom Whale Island and natural intelligence have turned into a gunner ? But as regards the regular Navy, the Navy of the Grand Fleet, you are right. Pick your boys from the sea families, catch them young, pump them full to the teeth with the Navy Spirit—*l'esprit marine* of our bi-lingual Sub here—make them drunk with it. Then they are all right. But they must never be allowed to think of a darned thing except of the job in hand. The Navy has no use for men who seek to peer into their own souls. They might do it in action and discover blue funk. We want them to be no more conscious of their souls than of their livers. Though I admit that it is devilish difficult to forget one's liver when one has been cooped up in a destroyer for a week. It is not nerve that Fritz lacks so much as a kindly obedient liver. He is an iron-gutted swine, and that is partly why he can't run destroyers and submarines against us. The German liver is a thing to wonder at. Do you know—' but here the Lieutenant-Commander became too Rabelaisian for my delicate pen.

The group had thinned out during this exercise in naval analysis. Several of the officers had resumed their heart-and-club-breaking struggle with the villainous golf course, but the Sub, the

volunteer Lieutenant, and the Pongo (Marine) still sat at the feet of their seniors. 'May I say how the Navy strikes an outsider like me?' asked Caesar diffidently. Whale Island, which had forgotten all other Latin authors, had given him the name as appropriate to one of his learning.

'Go ahead,' said the Commander generously. 'All this stuff is useful enough for a volunteer; without the Pongos and the Volunteers to swallow our tall stories, the Navy would fail of an audience. The snotties know too much.'

'I was going to speak of the snotties,' said Caesar, 'who seem to me to be even more typical of the Service than the senior officers. They have all its qualities emphasised, almost comically exaggerated. I do not know whether they are never young or that they never grow old, but there is no essential difference in age and in knowledge between a snotty six months out of cadet training and a Commander of six years' standing. They rag after dinner with equal zest, and seem to be equally well versed in the profound technical details of their sea work. Perhaps it is that they are born full of knowledge. The snotties interest me beyond every type that I have met. Their manners are perfect and in startling contrast with those of the average public school boy of fifteen or sixteen—even in College at Winchester—and they combine their real irresponsible youthfulness with a grave mask of professional learning which is delightful to look upon. I have before me the vision of a child of fifteen with tousled yellow hair and a face as glum as a sea-boot, sitting opposite to me in the machine which took us back one day to the boat, smoking a "fag" with the clumsiness which betrayed his lack of practice, in between bites of "goo" (in this instance Turkish Delight), of which I had seen him consume a pound. He looked about ten years old, and in a husky, congested voice, due to the continual absorption of sticky food, he described minutely to me the method of conning a battleship in manœuvres and the correct amount to allow for the inertia of the ship when the helm is centred; he also explained the tactical handling of a squadron during sub-calibre firing. That snotty was a sheer joy, and the Navy is full of him. He's gone himself, poor little chap—blown to bits by a shell which penetrated the deck.'

'In time, Caesar,' said the Commander, 'by strict attention to duty you will become a Navy man. But we have talked enough of deep mysteries. It was that confounded Sub, with his French imagination, who started us. What I really wish someone would

tell me is this: what was the "northern enterprise" that Fritz was on when we chipped in and spoilt his little game?'

'It does not matter,' said the Gunnery Lieutenant. 'We spoilt it, anyhow. The dear old newspapers talk of his losses in big ships as if they were all that counted. What has really crippled him has been the wiping out of his destroyers and fast new cruisers. Without them he is helpless. It was a great battle, much more decisive than most people think, even in the Grand Fleet itself. It was as decisive by sea as the Marne was by land. We have destroyed Fritz's mobility.'

The men rose and looked out over the bay. There below them lay their sea homes, serene, invulnerable, and about them stretched the dull, dour, treeless landscape of their northern fastness. Their minds were as peaceful as the scene. As they looked a bright light from the compass platform of one of the battleships began to flicker through the sunshine—dash, dot, dot, dash. 'There goes a signal,' said the Commander. 'You are great at Morse, Pongo. Read what it says, my son.'

The Lieutenant of Marines watched the flashes, and as he read grinned capaciously. 'It is some wag with a signal lantern,' said he. 'It reads: Question—Daddy,—what—did—you—do—in—the—Great—War?'

'I wonder,' observed the Sub-Lieutenant, 'what new answer the lower deck has found to that question. Before the battle their reply was: "I was kept doubling round the decks, sonny."'

'There goes the signal again,' said the Pongo; 'and here comes the answer.' He read it out slowly as it flashed word after word: "I LAID THE GUNS TRUE, SONNY."

'And a dashed good answer, too,' cried the Commander heartily.

'That would make a grand fleet signal before a general action,' remarked the Gunnery Lieutenant. 'I don't care much for Nelson's Trafalgar signal. It was too high-flown and sentimental for the lower deck. It was aimed at the history books, rather than at old tarry-breeks of the fleet a hundred years ago. No—there could not be a better signal than just "Lay the Guns True"—carry out your orders precisely, intelligently, faultlessly. What do you say, my Hun of a classical volunteer?'

'It could not be bettered,' said Caesar.

'I will make a note of it,' said the Gunnery Lieutenant, 'against the day when, as a future Jellicoe, I myself shall lead a new Grand Fleet into action.'

L'ILE NANCE.

BY ROWLAND CRAGG.

NANCE was a tomboy, or whatever may be the equivalent of this type in the doggy world, and she looked it. An ungainly body, clad in a rough coat of silver and grey on a foundation of brown, carried a head that appeared ill-shaped because of the unusual width of skull. Over her forehead continually straggled a tangle of hairs that mixed with others growing stiffly above her snout, and through this cover were to be seen two pearly eyes that were wondrously bright and intelligent. She had a trick, too, of tossing her head in a manner suggestive of nothing so much as a girl throwing back the curls from face and shoulders, and it seemed to emphasise the tomboy in Nance. But she had sterling qualities, of which her broad skull and quick eyes gave more than a hint. If ungainly, her little body was untiring and as supple as a whip-lash, and her legs were as finely tempered steel springs. She had, too, a rare turn of speed, and it was the combination of these gifts with her remarkable intelligence that in later days made her the most noted dog in Craven.

Her puppyhood was unpromising. Indeed, for one born on a farm, where is lack neither of shelter nor food, her earliest hours were doubly perilous, for, in addition to the prospect of a watery grave in a bucket, her existence, and that of the whole litter, was threatened by negligent nursing. Fate had given the little family a mother not only herself young, but of all dogs that ever worked on a farm the most irresponsible. It was quite in keeping with her reputation that Lucy should bring her children to birth in the exposed hollow trunk of a tree and then forget the blind, sprawling, whimpering puppies for hours together. It was going hard with the weaklings when fate again took a hand in their welfare, this time in the person of young Zub.

It had become evident to the farm folk, to whom matters of birth and reproduction are commonplaces of daily life, that Lucy's new duties had come upon her, and it was plainly evident, too, before the third day had run, that she was neglecting them. It was then that young Zub, or Zubdil, as he was indifferently called, either name serving to distinguish him from Owd Zub, his father, actively bestirred himself. Hitherto he had done no more than keep

his eyes and ears open as he moved about the farm buildings, but neither soft whimper nor the sound of tender noses nuzzling against a warm body had rewarded him. His first deliberate efforts were to watch Lucy's comings and goings, in the hope of tracing her hiding-place. But the mother dog, a poacher at heart and with all a four-footed poacher's cunning, had easily beaten him at this game. When he recognised this, angry at the thought that somewhere a small family was suffering, he soundly cuffed her about the ears in the hope that she would bolt for her hiding-place and her blind charges. But the graceless one, howling, raced no further than to her kennel, and from its depths kept one watchful eye open for further developments.

'Drat thee,' cried Zubdil, as his experiment went wrong, 'but I'll find 'em yet.' He turned and slowly entered the kitchen, where Owd Zub was quietly chuckling to himself.

'Shoo's bested thee, reight an' all, this time,' he said. 'Doesn't thy books tell thee owt?'

It was a thrust he was fond of making. Zubdil's strongly developed taste for reading was something beyond the old farmer's understanding. He would have given but occasional heed to it had not the younger man taken up works on scientific farming and breeding, and also studied these subjects in a course of postal lessons with the Agricultural Department at the Northern University. New ideas thus acquired often clashed with the father's ingrained conservative methods, and they left him sore. A chance to get in a sly dig at this 'book larning' was too good to be missed. He chuckled again as he asked the question.

The younger man laughed. He was broadening in more ways than one, and he bore no malice. 'Happen they do,' he said. 'Yo just watch, fayther, an' happen yo'll leearn summat.'

He reached up to the blackened oak beam that spanned the ceiling, took down his gun, and strolled casually out across the yard. In a moment Lucy had tumultuously burst out of the kennel and was dancing about him, all animation and keenness. Graceless she might be, and lacking in the discharge of her mothering duties, but heart and soul she was a lover of sport. At the sight of the gun she was in transports. Unheeding her, young Zub passed on through the gate. Wriggling through ere it closed, Lucy was after him and away in front of him like a streak, making river-wards. There, as well she knew, were the plumpest rabbits. When the old dalesman, his curiosity whetted, reached a point where he could

see without being seen, the two were ranging the low field where runs the Wharfe. Steadily they passed along through Dub End and into Lang Pasture, the gun still hooked in the curl of the man's arm, then as they came through the field gate together into the High Garth Lucy's tail suddenly drooped. She hesitated, turned about in indecision, and finally, disregarding the sharp whistle calling her to heel, slid off up the hill under the wall-side and vanished by the riven oak.

'Dang it,' said Owd Zub, greatly interested, and understanding, 'I owt to ha' knawn shoo'd ha' go oan to 'em if they came owt near 'em.'

By the time he arrived on the spot, and he walked across the field with a great show of carelessness, Zubdil had the whimpering youngsters on the grass and was examining them. Couched near by, her tail going in great pride, Lucy was mothering each one as it was laid down again.

'They're a poor lot,' said the elder man, eyeing them critically, and discreetly making no reference to the finding of them; 'put 'em ivvery one i' t' pail.'

Zubdil did not reply immediately. He was watching one puppy, more vigorous than any of the rest, trying to prop itself up on its forelegs. Its sightless eyes were turned towards him, its tiny nostrils were working, and there was a decided quiver—it was an immature wagging—in its wisp of a tail. He picked it up again. A tiny patch of red slid out and licked his hand, and there were faint noises that brought Lucy's ears to the prick. Zubdil laughed.

'Sitha for pluck, fayther,' he cried. 'This is best o' t' lot. I'se keeping this for mysen.'

'Thou'll drown t' lot,' said his father, sharply. 'We've dogs enough on t' farm. Besides, they're hawf deead.'

They are sparing of speech, these Craven dalesmen, but their words are ever to the point. They have also a stiff measure of obstinacy in their constitution, as have all men whose forebears for generations have lived and died amid the everlasting hills. Obstinacy now showed in the younger man. He put the youngster down beside the mother dog, gathered up the others into a bag that he took from his capacious pocket, and rose. Lucy was up in an instant, ears cocked. Zubdil checked her sternly.

'Lig thee theer,' he ordered, and she resumed her nursing under constraint. Young Zub turned to the elder.

'I'se keeping it,' he announced, briefly.

The other knew that tone, and gave in. 'Well,' grudgingly, 'I'se heving nowt to do wi' it, then. An' if theer's another licence to get, tha pays for it thysen.'

So the pup was spared, and she flourished and grew apace. Nance, he called her, after one from a neighbouring farm, thoughts of whom had been occupying his mind a good deal of late. He ventured to tell her what he had done when one evening, by chance that had been occurring frequently of late, he met her by the old bridge. The girl reddened with pleasure at the implied compliment, giggled a little, and gave him a playful nudge with her elbow. It was a nudge that would have upset many a city-bred man. 'Thou's a silly fond fellow,' she said, but there was no reproach in her words. Rather was it that in turn he was pleased. It was a little incident that marked a distinct advance in their relations.

It was also an incident that led young Zub to take more interest in the dog's welfare than otherwise he might have done. Dimly floating at the back of his mind, tinged with romance, was the idea that the four-footed Nance ought to be worthy of the name she bore. It led him to take her education in hand seriously, and to the task he brought all his fieldcraft, his native shrewdness, and his great patience. He began early, when she was not yet half grown and still a playful puppy; but, early as he was, someone was before him. Whatever her demerits as a mother, Lucy excelled in woodcraft and the art of the chase. She had the soul of an artist for it, which was perhaps why, as an ordinary working farm dog, she was an indifferent success. And what she knew she taught her daughter, taking the young one with her as soon as Nance was strong enough to stand these excursions. Their favourite time was dawn of day, and their hunting-ground the woods that mantled the breast of the moors high above the farm, or the sandy stretches along Wharfe side, where fat rabbits were abundant. Nance was an apt pupil. She learned to stalk, to obliterate herself behind seemingly inadequate cover, to crawl almost without action visible to the eye, and her instinct for choosing the moment for the final fatal rush was not bettered even in the older dog.

Thus it happened that when Zubdil took up her training the ground had been prepared for him better than ever he knew. Yet he began his task opportunely, for Nance was at the parting of the ways. Lucy was a clever dog, but her best and finest qualities, neglected through want of recognition, had deteriorated until she

was now no more than a cunning hunter. The little dog—l'île Nance she was to everybody—inherited all her mother's cleverness, and, happily for her, Zubdil took her in hand while yet she was in her plastic, impressionable days. He made her his constant companion. If he went no further than the length of the field to fasten up the chickens safe from the predatory fox, he called her to accompany him. If he went on to the moor, or to the village, or to a neighbouring farm, she was with him. And she was taught to do strange things. Sometimes she was sent chasing round a field and brought back to heel in zigzag tracings. At other times she was bidden to crouch by a gate and to stir not at all until his return. Sometimes she was sent ahead at full gallop and then made to stop dead and lie prone, when he would overtake and pass her, man and dog alike apparently unconscious of each other's presence, save for the way in which those pearly eyes of hers watched his every movement.

It was all done with no more language than can be conveyed in a whistle. But expressive! With his ash stick tucked under one arm Zubdil would thrust the better part, as it seemed, of both hands into his mouth, whence would proceed now a single piercing call, now a prolonged high-pitched note, now a series of staccato commands, and ever and again fluty modulations as if a blackbird had joined in the business. And every note had a definite meaning. It was a great game for Nance, who at these times was nothing more than two bright eyes and a pair of ever-working ears. She strove to please and worked hard, and when it dawned upon the deliberately moving mind of the young dalesman that he had a dog of unusual parts it stimulated him to greater efforts. It also stimulated him to secrecy, though why he could not have explained.

He gave her experience in the rounding-up of the half-wild, hardy, half-bred sheep on the moorlands, and here she learned to work dumbly, without yielding to the temptation to nip the flying legs of the nervous fleeces. It was on these uplands, too, that he received his first meed of praise, and it fired the smouldering pride in his heart and lifted him out of the ordinary workaday rut. For it gave him an idea. It was dipping-time, when the moors had to be thoroughly scoured for the sheep, and from a dozen farms in the dale below men had gathered together to co-operate in the work. With them came their dogs; dogs that barked and fought, dogs that raced hither and thither irresolutely trying to obey the many

and confusing whistlings, doing their best to please all and giving satisfaction to none. Young Zub stood on a knoll a little apart, and at his bidding a silver and grey-brown form flashed among the bracken and the ling, sometimes buried from sight, at times only the tips of pricked ears visible, but always making a wider and further stretching circle than the others. And wherever Nance ranged sheep came into view and were deftly piloted to the common gathering-ground.

It was Long Abram who first recognised what she was doing.

'That theer young dog o' thy lad's is doing weel,' he said, turning to Owd Zub. 'It'll mak a rare 'un i' time.'

It was luncheon-time, and the men had halted in their work to discuss the contents of the baskets that had been sent up from the farms. Owd Zub helped himself to another piece of cold apple pie before answering.

'It's a gooid dog nah,' he said presently, speaking with deliberation, 'if t' lad doesn't get it ower fond.'

'Ower fond?' It was Nance the woman who spoke. She had brought up her father's luncheon and was sitting near at hand. There was a sparkle in her eye, and her resolute little chin was thrust forth aggressively. 'Ower fond,' she repeated, scornfully. 'Some o' yo think us younger end can't do owt reight. Why, Zubdil's trained that dog reight, an' all. It's good enough for t' trials.'

The men laughed good-humouredly. The girl's relations with Zubdil were now well established and recognised, and her quick intervention was to be expected. But good enough for the trials—well, working it on the moors was one thing, but to direct an inexperienced dog on an enclosed field under the eyes of a crowd, and in competition with some of the best and most experienced trial working animals, was another matter altogether. They laughed at the girl's warmth, and let it go at that. But young Zub, happening to walk past at the time while counting up the sheep, heard the words. They quickened him and gave birth to the idea, while Long Abram's praise, which, if brief, went a long way, emboldened him. He thought deeply, but kept his counsel; not even to Nance did he open his mind for some time. But he worked the young dog even more regularly and watched her keenly. Then one day he wrote a letter, and the girl, face flushed, looked on.

A few weeks later the two, with Owd Zub, were units in the crowd that had gathered in a large field in a village some miles higher up the dale. It was the dale's annual agricultural show

and gala day, and all the farming community that could toddle, walk, or ride, to say nothing of visitors, had converged upon the spacious pasture. On the back of the right hand of each and all of them was an impression in purple ink; it was the pass-out check, imprinted upon each one with a rubber date stamp by a stalwart, red-faced policeman, who stood guard at the gate. They have little use for gloves, these folk of the Craven dales.

The three, with l'ile Nance stretched at ease at their feet, stood somewhat apart from the crowd. Owd Zub was uneasy and a trifle wrathful, and also, having already paid several visits to the refreshment booth, inclined to be querulous. Not until that morning, as they were packing into the farm gig, had he learned that l'ile Nance had been entered for the sheep-dog trials. For years these trials had been the feature of the show, and they attracted good dogs, and knowing this, and being convinced that the little dog would not shine against such opponents, he was sore. Deep down in his heart he was proud of his son, and he did not relish seeing him beaten before his fellows of the dale.

'What chance hes shoo?' he growled. 'Theer's lots o' first-class dogs here. There's Tim Feather wi' his, 'at's run i' theese trials for t' past six year. An' theer's Ike Thorpe, thro' t' Lancashire side. He's ta'en t' first prize here this last two year. He's owd hand at t' game, an' soa is his dog.'

'Well,' said his son, 'if he wins it ageean he can hev it.'

He spoke somewhat abstractedly. The trials had already begun, and he was more intent on watching his rivals and in familiarising himself with the course than in listening to the elder man. It was a long field and of good breadth, so that there was plenty of room for the sheep to run. Along the farther side, close to the bank of the river, were three sets of upright posts, like goal-posts, but lacking the net and cross-bar. Through these the sheep had to be driven, and whilst this was being done the owner of the dog had to stay near the judges; he was, in fact, looped to a rope attached to a stake to prevent him, in his eagerness, going to the assistance of his animal. As a consequence, all his commands had to be given in whistles or by word of mouth. Near the head of the enclosure was the second set of obstacles—a cross-road made of hurdles. The sheep had to be piloted through each road and then driven to a little hurdle enclosure and penned there. The competing owners were allowed to drop their rope and go to the help of their dogs at the cross-roads and the pen, and the winning dog was the

one that penned the sheep in the shortest time with the fewest mistakes.

Young Zub was the last to compete, and so far the best performance had been done by Ike's dog, which had penned its three allotted sheep in fine style in nine-and-a-half minutes. As the young farmer looped the rope about his arm he took stock of his three sheep, held by as many perspiring attendants at the far end of the enclosure. They were fresh from the moors that morning, and their fear and wildness were manifest. Zubdil saw that there would be trouble if once they broke away, but he was cool and unfurried as he nodded to the time-keeper to indicate that he was ready.

'Time,' said that official, and dropped a white handkerchief. It was the signal for the men to let go the sheep, which, once released, ran a little way, and then began to nibble the rich luscious grass. It was grand fare for them after what the moors had provided. At the same instant Zubdil waved his stick. As if galvanised into life, Nance, who had been stretched lazily at his feet snapping at the flies, shot up the field like an arrow from a bow. Young Zub, straining hard at the rope, his fingers in his mouth, watched her every stride, judging both pace and distance. A moment later a shrill whistle, a long-drawn-out rising cadence, went up, and with one ear cocked by way of reply the young dog closed in on the rear of the nibbling sheep. They threw up their heads and broke towards the river in a swift rush. A series of sharp notes stabbed the air, and l'ile Nance, belly flat almost, such was her speed, swung round them and headed them off. Back they came in a huddled group to the very mouth of the first lot of posts. For a second they hesitated, uncertain where to run, but Nance was coming up on their rear and they broke through. Hard on their heels she followed, swinging now right, now left, as one or other made as if to burst away, and so skilful her piloting that she took them straight away through the second line of posts at the run. A loud cheer went up from the onlookers; it was a neat bit of work. But not a man but knew that things were going too well; it is not in the nature of driven sheep to keep the proper course for long together.

True to their traditions of stupidity and contrariness, they broke away fan-wise when nearing the last posts. Zubdil, straining on loop until he was drawn sideways, sent out clear, quick calls, a Morse code of commands. Nance was as if making circles on her two near legs. With ears laid flush, body stretching and closing

like a rubber cord, she flashed round the heads of the straying ones, collected them and hustled them through the posts at panic speed. Once again that rising note rang out, and in response she swept them round in a wide circle towards the cross-roads. This was the danger point, for the hurdles stood close to the ring of spectators, and here, if anywhere, the sheep were most likely to bolt out of hand.

What happened was the unexpected. A fussy fox-terrier, excited by the tumult and its nerves snapping at the sight of the racing sheep, broke loose from its owner and, open-mouthed and noisy, sprang in to take a hand. It caught the nearest sheep and nipped its leg. A roar of anger went up; an interruption like this was against all tradition. Young Zub, who was racing across the field to join l'ile Nance, rapped out an excusable 'damn,' and half a dozen farmers on the edge of the ring loudly expressed a wish to break the neck of the terrier, and to 'belt' the careless owner of that animal. On the slope above the crowd Owd Zub was dancing with rage.

'They done it a' purpose,' he roared, his voice booming above the din. 'Sumboddy's done it a' purpose. They knawed t' l'ile dog 'ud win. We'll hev another trial. We'll tak all t' dogs i' England an' back wer own for a ten-pun noat. We'll hev another trial.'

In deep wrath he was making his way to the enclosure, one hand fumbling meanwhile to get into the pocket where lay his old-fashioned purse, securely tied and buttoned up, when a hand gripped him firmly. Another, equally decided in its action, closed over his mouth.

'Ho'd thi din,' cried Nance, for it was she. 'It's all reight. Sitha, look at t' l'ile dog nah. Well done, Zubdil.'

It was all over in a moment, but it was a stirring moment. L'ile Nance had dealt with the intruder. Taking it in her stride, she had seized the terrier by the back of the neck, flung it from her with a toss of her head, and was about her business. She and her master had to deal with a serious situation, for one sheep, in mad panic at the terrier's attack and at the feel of its teeth in her leg, had bolted blindly through the crowd, clearing the fence in one fine leap. A silver-and-grey streak flew through the opening thus made, and in a second both dog and sheep were swallowed up among the onlookers. Zub, down on his knees the better to see through the legs of the huddled spectators, was whistling until he was well-

nigh black in the face, but he never lost his head. His calls were wonderful, articulate almost. They were thrilling, short, but infinitely encouraging and coaxing. Many a man would have deeply cursed his dog; every ounce of Zubdil went into encouraging the little animal. 'Over, over, over,' said the whistles, as plainly as could be, and at the moment that the other Nance on the slope had stayed the wrathful old farmer, her four-footed namesake came back over the fence in the rear of the missing sheep.

The prodigal, bearing down upon its fellows, who had stopped to graze the moment they found they were not being harried, alarmed them, and they fled. By good luck they bore down straight upon the cross-road hurdles. With Zubdil on one flank, l'ile Nance on the other, there was no escape, and they bolted straight through. All the precious seconds lost by the incident of the fox-terrier were thus won back, with more to them. Nance awaited the panting fleeces at the exit, and with her tongue lolling, and her bright eyes just visible through the tangled fringe of hair, she appeared to be grinning them a welcome. The sheep spun round to avoid her, and were brought up opposite the second entrance by the long form of the young farmer. His arms were swaying, gently, unhurriedly, waving them into the entrance. There was need now of patience and tact, for seconds were becoming precious, and an over-alarmed sheep is a—mule. He whistled softly with pursed lips while yet they hesitated what to do. Nance sank prone.

Save that there was a dark patch against the green of the grass, she had disappeared. Without any visible movement the patch drew nearer the hesitating sheep. It was pretty work, and the crowd marked their admiration by their dead silence. The sheep sighted the dog, backed round to face her, and crowded with their hind-quarters against the hurdle. Zubdil was silent, motionless, save for the slow movement of his arms. Nance slid a little nearer, nearer yet. The sheep crowded further back against the opening. She was not now a yard away. Suddenly she sat up and panted hard. One of the animals, turning sharply to escape, found an opening, pushed along it in dread haste. The other two struggled for next place, and the cross-roads were won.

Again was l'ile Nance there to meet them as they gained the open, and collecting them smartly she raced them off towards the pen. They broke away, but their wild rush ended in their being brought up exactly against the opening of the pen. Zubdil was there, too, his arms going like the sails of a windmill on an almost

breezeless day. They pushed past the opening, and Nance rose up out of the grass to greet them. They spun about and raced off, but in a trice she was doing trick running about their heads and flanks, and when they stopped for breath the mouth of the pen was again before them. Zubdil drew a cautious step nearer, arms outspread, his lips puckered. Just wide of him a pair of ears pricked up above the grass. There was a moment's hesitation; one of the sheep poked its head through the mouth of the pen. Nance glided a little nearer, and the other two animals crowded against the first. Another step into the pen; the dog was only a yard away. There was a flurried movement about the opening. L'ile Nance sat up and lolled out a red tongue. She appeared to be laughing. There was a crush, a scramble, the sheep burst in, and Nance slid across the opening, lay down, and fixed her pearly eyes on her master. What wonder if she appeared to be grinning cheerfully?

Before the cheering had subsided, a stolid-faced judge stepped towards Zubdil. The pink rosette which denoted the first prize was in his hand, and at the sight of it there was more cheering. The other Nance on the slope clutched the arm of Owd Zub. For his part he was smiling broadly, and ecstatically slapping his leggings hard with his ash stick.

'Nine-an'-a-quarter minutes,' said the judge, handing the rosette to the young farmer. 'By gum, but it wor a near do. Shoo's a rare 'un, that dog o' thine, an' nobbut a young 'un, too.'

But Zubdil's greatest reward came later. It was not the hearty congratulations of so doughty an opponent as Ike, nor the incoherent remarks of Owd Zub. It was when an arm slid through his, when eyes dimmed with the moisture of genuine pride looked into his, and a low voice said:

'I'se reight glad, lad. I is.'

He laughed, gladly. Then openly, unashamed, he stooped and took toll of her lips. Nor was he denied. And the other Nance, looking up from where she lay at their feet, tossed back a lock of hair and wagged her tail in approval.

FRAGMENTS FROM GERMAN EAST.

BY A SOLDIER'S WIFE.

A STILL lagoon of veld, mile upon mile. Nowhere in the world, I should suppose, does the tide of battle ebb and flow so almost imperceptibly. Sometimes, only in echo, we hear the thunder of the overwhelming seas—sometimes, just now and then, the ripple at our feet breaks in a little cloud of spray and for a moment dims the eyes that are used to vast spaces, with sudden yearning for an island home beneath the far horizon, and perhaps hands tremble a little in tearing the wrapper from the daily newspaper.

But enough for us, so far, has been our all unequal struggle with Nature, who turns our skies to steel and with fierce winds scatters the hovering clouds, while the young crops shrivel and the watersprings are dry and the eyes of the beasts wait upon us who can give them no meat in due season.

A Kaffir boy comes round one evening and sings a doggerel he has fashioned from an old nigger melody, and others join in the foolish refrain :

‘I come to Basutoland,
I come through lands and sea,
I kill five thousand Germans,
With my banjo on my knee.’

We laugh and throw him a tickey, and turn again to watch the skies—to-morrow, perhaps, the rains will come and we can plough and sow. For the dread hand that writes upon the wall has formed no fearful word for us—as yet—and sympathy, deep and very real as it is, stands in our lexicon as ‘a feeling for’ rather than ‘a feeling with.’

And then a cable calls me in haste to Durban to meet a returning transport and suddenly there is nothing in the world but war and its magnificence and its horror. The clusters of people at various stations who come to meet the mail train—the event of the day—the youths who slouch up and down the platform with loud voices and noisy jests, the girls who laugh with them, the groups of farmers talking of the crops—all these rouse me to a feeling of irritation, then to an impotent anger.

‘Come with me,’ I want to urge, ‘and I will take you where men are heroes in life and death.’ And again, ‘Is it nothing

to you that your brothers agonise? Will you jest while the earth opens under your feet?'—and something ominous creeps into the meaningless laughter.

And then at last comes Durban, and I am surrounded with war activities and what was sinister has vanished in the wholesomeness of sacrifice and strenuous work.

To hundreds here war work has become their daily life. The town is always full of soldiers—Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans—coming and going. Here is a company of New Zealanders winding up the street. From a balcony I watch them marching with a fine swing—well set-up, stalwart fellows. Some come with a tray of cigarettes and we throw packets down amongst them, and their upturned, laughing boyish faces ask for more. Youngsters all of these, eager for happiness, eager for a slap at the Germans, and to 'see life'—and their destination is the battlefield of Flanders! At the corner they dismiss and there is a race for the rickshaws; three crowd into one, and the Zulu boy gladly sweats up the incline and capers and leaps when the downward slope relieves him, knowing that for his brief exertion he will ask and get six times his lawful fee. His ostrich feathers wave, his black limbs flash, and the passengers lean back and laugh.

And the other side of the picture—a shipload of returning Australians, on crutches, arms in slings, helpless on wheeled chairs, with the look of the trenches on the brave faces that smile their grateful thanks. For to each and all Durban has a warm welcome. While they still lie off the Point, a girl signaller bids them come to the Y.M.C.A. Hut for all that they want, ladies from the Patriotic League wait on the wharf with supplies of cigarettes and fruit, motor-cars and carriages stop to pick up stragglers and carry them home to dinner, to a concert or theatre, and the Hut itself tempts with open doors to the comforts within, to the tables strewn with magazines and papers, to the letter-writing facilities and varied games, to the most excellent meals, where one penny will give a hungry man a liberal helping of cold meat or an appetising plate of fish mayonnaise, while a second penny provides the steaming cup.

Down on the Point a little crowd has gathered. The steamer is a day late, and wives and mothers sit and wait, or restlessly ply any and all with endless reiterate questions, or hold impatiently to a telephone receiver. And the night falls, and along the beach gardens the coloured lights hang in jewelled strings against the dark. A drizzle of rain makes a halo of their blurred radiance,

the band plays, the few wanderers—the last of the holiday-makers—talk of their homeward journey, for the summer and the beginning of the season of rains are with us. Far out in the bay a mast-head light springs up, then more lights, a stir of excitement in the gathering crowd at the Point, and slowly the tug leads the transport to her moorings.

'Stand back—stand back! Make way there!' and with a whirl of starting engines, the motor ambulances steer their way through the pressing crowd, and slowly the stretcher-bearers carry their freight along the lower deck and round the difficult angle of the lowered gangway. In silence this, and the greetings are very quiet as the waiting women meet their loved ones again—for this great steamer with her rows of decks and wide accommodation holds but the remnant of a regiment. Fifteen hundred strong they marched through Durban nine months ago, and how many have not returned! Fever, dysentery, debility, starvation, wounds and death—these have all taken their toll.

I suppose there are few parts of the world which nature has made more difficult to the intruder than German East Africa. In the forest the thorny creepers join tree to tree in close high walls until the very stars—man's only guide—are hidden, nearly all the trees also are a-bristle with protecting spears, sharp as needles to pierce and tear the flesh, and to leave behind, it may be, a poisoned festering sore. Mountain ranges throw their boulders and tear their gaping chasms in the way, the streams, too few and far between for thirsty man, are torrents to be crossed on fallen logs, on slimy boulders where one sees the sudden agony flash in the eyes of a laden mule that slips, and with a struggle of frantic hoofs is tossed to death. A herd of elephants crashes like thunder through the scrub, trumpeting their suspicion of man's presence, the lions prowling unheard startle with a sudden hungry roar and seek their meat from God.

Then come the swamps where the crocodile lies in the slime, and snakes coil, and the mosquito goes about its deadly work. Men sink to their waists in mud, the transports break down—all are tried in vain, ox waggons, mule carts, motor-cars, 'and then we go hungry,' said one man to me. Gaunt and weak, with eyes too bright for health, he smiled and spoke lightly—a least trembling of the hands, a twitch of a muscle, a look behind the smiling eyes which no laugh could quite conceal, these the only signs of the overstrained, still quivering nerves. He told me the story of how the flour supply ran out, of how the pangs of hunger were eased with

the flesh of donkey or rhinoceros. For eight days the hungry men waited and watched and then a transport laden with sacks appeared—and the sacks held newspapers!

Another spoke. 'The worst thing that ever I went through was in the — valley. Will you ever forget it, Mike? We were going into action along one of those awful winding elephant tracks through grass above our heads—sort of maze, and you don't know where you'll find yourself next minute, perhaps back where you came from, or perhaps in a clearing, looking into the muzzle of a machine gun—can't see a foot ahead. Suddenly the Boches opened fire, and at the very same moment we were attacked by a swarm of bees. Sounds funny, but I can tell you it wasn't. There were millions of 'em, going for us all they were worth. The horses and pack-mules went near mad and there were we, blind and dazed, stumbling along trying to keep the brutes from our faces and the enemy's fire dropping around. Pretty sights we were when they'd finished with us—my two eyes were bunged up so I'd just a slit to see through, and hands so stiff and swollen I could scarce bend my fingers.'

'My worst day,' and another took up the tale, 'was just when we were at our worst off for food—fair starved we were, and just at daybreak a family of rhinos came charging through our camp—Pa and Ma and a lot of rum little coves scooting after them. Well, thinks I, a slice of Pa would come in very handy grilled, so off I treks with two or three chaps after me, and there, far below the rise, was a vlei and a whole lot of rhinos standing round. Worse luck, as we got down, we found it just chock-a-block with crocodiles. You hardly see them at first, but just look close and you see a mud-bank sort of heave and here and there you'll get the glimpse of a great wide jaw, the colour of the mud and as still, never moving an inch, but with eyes watching the rhinos all the time. I tell you we didn't go any too close, but we were mortal hungry, so we tried to edge round to the rhinos, keeping well clear of the mud and slime. One huge awkward-looking brute was a bit away from the others and the swamp, so we let fly and brought him down, staggering and falling not very far from us—but by God, if these crocs hadn't ripped out and got him before we had a show, and so we didn't get dinner that day. As nasty brutes as you'd care to see, those crocs. A chap of ours shot one of 'em one day and cut it open, and inside he found an anklet ornament and a ring. How's that for an ugly story? At another camp a horse went down to the river to drink all serene, no sign of another living thing—when sudden up

comes a grinning jaw, and like a flash of light, it snaps on the poor beast's nose and pulls him in, and there was an end of him.'

In the more open country grows the giant grass, waving over a man's head, dense and resistant as sugar-cane, and once a source of deathly peril. The regiment had dug itself in some 300 yards from the enemy trenches, when the wind, blowing in their faces, brought to the men a smell of burning, and with a sudden roar a sea of flames came sweeping down upon them—the enemy had set fire to the tall grass. There was not a second to spare. The men leaped up and, weak and exhausted as they were, forced their failing strength into clearing the ground and cutting a fire belt. It was done with the speed of demons, for a fiercer demon was upon them; the men with their tattered garments that would have flared up so easily, put half a life into those few seconds.

The heat of the fire was on their faces, blinding their eyes, the flames reached out tongues towards their store of ammunition. Under cover of the fire and smoke the enemy came out and attacked heavily. Our men leaped back, turned the full strength of their fire on the enemy through the blinding smoke, and suddenly, miraculously—the *wind changed!* It is gratifying to know that in a few moments the enemy survivors were hurried back to their trenches before the flames, to find their grass shelters on fire, and under a withering storm from every rifle, maxim, and gun a grim silence fell upon their trenches.

And so Nature, whose gigantic forces have joined our enemy's in this war against us, for once played him false; but the Hun is always quick to turn her help to his best advantage. He sees to it that every post, detached house, village, kraal, &c., has the protection of a 'boma'—a thick impenetrable fence made of thorn trees, with the huge strong spikes thrust outwards and the smooth butts inside the shelter, made of such height and depth as is necessary to resist the onslaught of elephant and rhinoceros and the cunning of the lion. All around a wide thorn carpet is spread to pierce the feet of the intruder. Imagine such a 'boma' flanked by rifle and machine-gun fire from deep trenches concealed by cover and by a 'false boma' in rear which makes the boma line apparently continuous—and a frontal attack by infantry becomes a hazardous undertaking.

'Could not the artillery destroy them?' I asked, and was told of the difficulties of locating the trenches for this purpose and of the unlimited supply of high-explosive shells that would be required. All approaches to defended posts have lanes cut through the bush,

and these are so arranged in irregular shape that every open piece of ground can be covered by machine-gun and cross rifle fire.

Of the hardships of the march, of the hunger and thirst—once a battle was fought for two days before a drop of water could be obtained—of the fever and exhaustion, I could guess from watching the speakers, and from the men's talk to each other I heard of the skilfully posted machine guns alert for a fleeting glimpse of troops grouped, perhaps, round a wounded man, of the snipers in the trees, of the maxims fired from the backs of animals clothed in grass, of the danger of horrors and mutilation should a wounded man fall into the hands of the Askari. All of this I was told freely; but of the endurance, the magnificent self-oblation, the comradeship and devotion, these came to my ears only from those who had commanded troops and who could barely speak of these things for a catch in the throat.

The actual warfare, the battles, the bayonet charges, the fervour and courage of attack—these are described by newspaper correspondents in cables and despatches; but of the more human side—'the soul of the war'—few tales reach the outside world. The courage of endurance, the absence of one word of complaint from men so weak, latterly, that five miles a day sometimes had to be the limit of their march—who shall tell of these?

Hear one last story from an outsider.

'That regiment of yours is very thick with its companion regiment, the Nth,' he said. 'A chap who is in the Nth told me the one regiment never loses a chance of doing the other a good turn. Once, he said, the Nth were in the first firing line, only 150 yards from the enemy. There had been no chance of getting water-bottles filled, and the men's tongues were swollen with thirst. The other chaps were suffering a lot too, but what do you think they did? All the regiment, officers and men, sent up every bottle that had a drain left in it to the fellows of the Nth, and mind you this was done under continuous fire. Pretty fine, wasn't it?'

A bugle call, a whistle, and the short breathing space is past.

Faces lean over the bulwarks, pink and boyish beside the thin and often haggard brown, hands are waved and with songs and cheers the old regiment, reinforced with its recruits, sways slowly and steams into the blue.

Were the whole history of the war ever to be written, were the myriad glorious deeds ever to be chronicled, would the world itself contain the books that should be written?

COQ-D'OR: A LETTER TO A SOUL.

BY R. C. T.

MY DEAR DICK,—When you went out from the breastwork that night, along the little muddy path, and whispered me a laughing *au revoir*, I thought no more of it than of a hundred similar episodes that made up day and night in these mad, half-romantic, unbelievable times. There was nothing especial to make the incident memorable. It was ten o'clock at night and the second relief for the sniper pits had gone out half an hour or so. A frost had started after the previous day's cold rain, the water-filled crump holes had iced over and the so-called paths through the wood were deceptively firm looking, though in reality one's feet and legs sank through the ice a foot deep into that ghastly, sticky foot-trodden mud.

I knew your job—to visit the listening patrols and the snipers on the edge of the wood—and I remember thinking that your habit of going out alone without an orderly was foolish, near though the posts might be to the breastworks. However, you were young—four and twenty isn't a great age, Dick—and I recalled your saying that you would no more think of taking an orderly than of asking a policeman to pilot you across Piccadilly Circus.

The wood was fairly quiet that night, though there were the usual bursts of machine-gun fire, the stray ping of high rifle shots against the branches of the trees, and the noisy barking of that fussy field battery of ours which always seemed to want to turn night into day. The light of the moon let me see you disappear into the shadows, and I heard the scrunch of your feet as you picked between the tree trunks a gingerly way. Then I went along the breastwork line, saw that all was right, found Peter munching chocolate and reading a month-old copy of *The Horse-Breeders' Gazette*!—fellows read such funny literature in war time—in his dug-out—and myself turned down the corduroy path to the splinter-proof hut that you so excellently named 'The Château.'

Dennis and Pip had already turned in and had left me an uncomfortably narrow space to lie down beside them, and they were daintily snoring. Through the partition beyond I heard our company servants doing the same, only with greater vigour in their snore. But my bed was already prepared, the straw was only moderately dirty and odorous, and after ridding my boots with a scraper of some portion of the mud, I thrust my feet into the sand-

bags, lay down, coiled myself up comfy in my bag and blankets and went to sleep.

For ten minutes only. Then I suddenly awakened into full consciousness and found myself sitting up staring into the darkness, and the chinks of moonlight coming in below and at the sides of the ill-fitting door. I was listening intently too, and I did not know why. The wood was absolutely quiet at the moment, and Dennis, Pip, and the servants had all settled off into their second sleep where snoring is an intrusion.

I had not dreamt, or I had no recollection of any dream if I had. But upon me was a curious ill-defined sensation of uneasiness. No, I am wrong—uneasiness is not the word. The feeling was merely that something had happened. I did not know where or how or to whom.

Now the one thing one ought not to be in war time is fidgety. It is a bad habit and yet a habit into which it is very easy to drift. So with this thought upon me I deliberately lay quietly down again and attempted to renew the sleep from which I had so suddenly been wakened. Of course I failed. Sleep had gone from me completely, absolutely, and moreover there was a force—that indefinite word best describes it—impelling me to be up and doing. Doing what Heaven only knew! I struggled against the feeling for a minute or two, then I definitely gave in to it. Fidgety or not, I was going out of the hut.

Dennis wakened momentarily as I rose and untied the sand-bags off my legs and made for the door. He muttered 'What's the matter?' heard my 'Nothing, go to sleep again,' and did as he was told.

The night was beautiful outside and I stood at the door of the hut shivering a little with the cold, but thinking what a madness it was that had turned this wonderful wood into a battlefield! The sound of a rifle shot knocking off a twig of a tree three or four feet above me recalled my thoughts. Mechanically I felt to see that I had my revolver, and then with my trusty walking-stick in my hand I went up to the front breastworks.

I went along them and found all correct—the sentries alert and at their posts. They were in the third night of their spell in the trenches and in the moonlight they gave one the impression of sand-stone statues, their khaki a mass of dried yellow clay. Then I peeped in at Peter and found the youth still munching chocolate, and afterwards I went along to your abode expecting to find you asleep, and found instead that your tiny dug-out was untenanted.

The curious feeling that had wakened me from my sleep had disappeared while I had been making my tour of the breastworks and only now did it reappear. There was no especial reason why I should have been anxious, for a score of things might have taken you elsewhere, but I nevertheless found myself striding quickly back to the little gap between No. 2 and 3 breastworks, the spot where I had last seen you and where you had bidden me good-night. I questioned the sentry. It happened to be Rippon, that quaint little five-foot-three cockney, who, I honestly believe, really likes war and chuckles because he is genuinely amused when a shell hits the ground ten yards in rear and misses the trench itself. He had seen nothing of you since we parted.

'Mr. Belvoir,' he said—and you know how he mutilates the pronunciation of your name—'never comes back the same way as he goes out.' He gave me the information with a trace of reproof in his voice, as though I ought to have remembered better the principal points of my own lectures on Outposts, which I had so often given the company in peace time. I nodded, walked along to the other sentries and questioned them. They had none of them seen you return. They were all quite confident that you had not passed by them.

I returned to Rippon and stood behind him a moment or two. The cold was increasing and he was stamping his feet on the plank of wood beneath him, and humming to himself quietly. I did not want to seem anxious, but I was. I could not understand what had become of you, where you had gone. I took a pace or two towards Rippon and spoke to him.

'Things been quiet to-night?' I said casually.

He started at the sound of my voice, for he had not heard my approach.

'Quieter than usual, sir,' he answered. 'There was a bit of a haroosh on the left half an hour ago and the Gerboys opposite us took it up for a minute or so, but they've quieted down since. Funny creatures, them Gerboys,' he ruminated—'good fighters and yet always getting the wind up. I remember at Ligny when we was doin' what wasn't too elegant a retirement, me and Vinsen was in a farm'ouse . . .'

I stopped him hurriedly. When Rippon gets on to the subject of Ligny his garrulity knows no bounds.

'I'm going out ahead, Rippon,' I said. 'I'll come back again this way. Warn the next sentry that I shall be doing so. Give me an orderly, too.' Rippon looked at me curiously. Perhaps

my tone was not normal. Then he bent down and stirred a man snoring in the breastwork beside him. The man stirred uneasily and then suddenly jumped up and clutched at the rifle through the sling of which his right arm was thrust.

'What's up?' he murmured. Rippon smiled.

'It ain't no attack,' he answered. 'The Captain wants you as his orderly.'

A minute later we had left the breastwork line and were out in front in the wood, our feet breaking through the thin film of ice and sinking over our ankles in the mud beneath. Belgian mud may not be any different from other mud, but to my dying day I shall always imagine it so. It clasps you as though it wants to pull and keep you down, as though, with so many of your friends lying beneath it, you too should be there. We tugged our feet out each step, treading on fallen branches where we could. I tried to trace by footsteps the path you had taken, but failed. I could not think of anything better to do than go out to the sniping pits and question the men there to know if you had visited them.

I turned to the left then and made for number one group, Bell, my orderly, following a pace or two behind. A cloud came over the face of the moon, the night became suddenly dark, and the next moment I had stumbled and almost fallen over what I imagined for a second to be a stray sand-bag.

It was not a sand-bag, God knows it was not! The moon reappeared and I saw it was you, Dick, lying on your side, with your legs outstretched. I bent down when I realised that it was a body, turned you over on your back and with Bell's assistance ripped open your Burberry, your tunic and your vest. A bullet had gone straight through your heart, there was a little spot of congealed blood on your breast, and—you had died—well, as suddenly and as easily as you deserved to do, Dick. On your face was a smile.

I am not good at analysing feelings and there is no purpose in trying to analyse mine. Indeed, I cannot remember exactly what my sensations were. I had no sorrow for you, as I have never had sorrow for those killed in this war. I do not suppose two men have ever been closer friends than you and I, yet I was not even sorry for myself. I remember that I turned to Bell and said half angrily: 'I told him to take an orderly, I was always telling him to take an orderly!'

I heard Bell's irrelevant reply, 'Damn them Bosches, sir.' (The men in your platoon had an affection for you, Dick.) Then together

we raised you, your wet clothes frozen, your hair matted with mud, and picking up your cap and rifle from the ground, carried you slowly back to the breastwork line, and there wakened a couple of stretcher bearers.

Oh! I'm sick of this war, Dick, dully, angrily sick of it. This world can't be anything, I know, otherwise fellows like you would be kept in it. For a week or two the fighting is all right; it is amazing, and wonderful and elemental. Then as month after month goes by, when there is nothing in your brain but making your line stronger, when you think in sand-bags and machine guns and barbed wire and bombs, when the stray shot or the casual shell kills or lacerates some sergeant or corporal whom you have had since his recruit days in your company, given C.B. to, spoken to like a father, recommended step by step for promotion and at length grown to trust and rely on—then it begins to show its beastliness and you loathe it with a prolonged and fervent intensity.

Down at the field dressing station half a mile away, the young doctor did what he could to preserve the decencies of death. I stood at the door of the little cottage and looked out into the night. I remember that my thoughts flew back to the immediate days before the war and to a night a little party of us spent at the Russian Opera at Drury Lane, when we saw that wonderful conceit '*Coq-d'Or*.' You, your sister, I and that young Saxon friend of yours—and of your sister's too! We had dined at The Carlton and were ever so pleased with life. We had chuckled delightedly at the mimic warfare on the stage, the pompous King, the fallen heroes. Now the mimic warfare had turned to reality and here you were—dead in a ruined Belgian cottage.

I left after a quarter of an hour and returned to the wood, my feelings numb, my brain a blank. The corduroy path seemed interminably long. Sleep was not for me that night and the morning would do to tell Peter, Dennis and Pip that you were killed. Unaccompanied by any orderly this time, I went through the breastwork line to the spot where we had found you. The impress of your body was on the ground; your loaded revolver, which for some reason or other you must have had in your hand, was lying a yard or two away. I picked it up, examined it and noticed that a round had been fired.

I wondered why. You must have aimed at somebody and that somebody must have shot back at you, and the somebody must have been close. You were not the sort of man to blaze off into the blue. I leant against a tree and tried to think the matter out.

Our snipers were out on your left, so the shot could not have come from that direction, and a hundred yards on the right was the machine-gun emplacement and the first of the outworks. In between was Potsdam House, that no-man's habitation into which, before the outskirts of the wood had become definitely ours, sometimes the German patrols had wandered and sometimes ours. We had had a working party there the night before sand-bagging the shell-shattered walls and making the place a defensive or a jumping-off spot, as one might wish.

It was almost unthinkable that any German or Germans could have reached it, for we had a listening patrol fifty yards ahead, but it was just possible that a brave man might have avoided the patrol and have done so. At the thought I made up my mind to move forward, and took my revolver from my holster. My wits suddenly became keen again, my lassitude left me, the sight of the outline of your body on the frozen mud made me angry, wild.

I had only fifty yards to go, but I went as cautiously and silently as I could. I did not intend to be killed if I could help it. I was out to avenge, not to add another life to the German bag. I chose the spot for each step with excessive care. I stopped and listened if my feet were making too much noise on the frozen ground.

Then just as I was about twenty yards from my objective I heard a sound. Stopping suddenly, I listened. Someone was talking in a confused, halting sort of way. A snatch of conversation, a long pause, and then another remark. The voice was so low that I could not make out words, but I had the impression that it was not English that was being spoken. The tone was uniform too, as though it were not two people but one speaking—a curious, pointless monologue it sounded like.

My heart was beating a little more quickly, my fingers clutched my revolver a little more tightly. I knelt down, wondering what to do. The voice came from the ruined Potsdam House, and if indeed a small German patrol had got in there it seemed foolhardy to go alone to meet them. On the other hand, it might be but one person there, though why he should be talking thus to himself I could not imagine. Anyhow, foolhardy or not, I was going to find out.

I moved forward therefore over the intervening yards slowly and as quietly as might be. The voice broke off at times, then continued, and each time that it stopped I halted too, lest in the stillness I should be betrayed.

You remember the little pond at the side of the house, the pond

that has at the bottom of it, to our knowledge, a dead Bavarian and an Argyll and Sutherland Highlander? At the edge of it I must have stopped a full five minutes, lying flat upon my stomach and listening to the intermittent sound of the voice. It was clearer now, low but distinct, and at last I knew for a certainty that the words came from a German throat. Occasionally a light laugh broke out which sounded uncannily in the still air. Laughter is not often heard from patrols between the lines, and I was puzzled and interested too.

A minute later I had clambered over the broken-down wall and was in what we used to think must have been the drawing-room of the house. Some time after this war is over I shall return and make straight for this house. I want to see what it looks like in daytime. I want to be able to stand in front of it and look out on the country beyond. I've crawled into it a dozen times at night, I've propped up its shelled, roofless walls with sand bags, I've made a look-out loophole in the broken-down chimney. I've seen dim outlines from its glassless windows of hills and houses, but I am sure, quite sure, that when I see it and the country beyond it in the full glare of a summer sun I shall give a gasp of astonishment at what it is and what I thought it was.

Once inside the house I paused no longer, but, my revolver ready, my finger on the trigger, made straight for the spot from which came the voice.

My revolver was not needed, Dick. In the furthest corner of what we used to think must be the living-room, just near the spot where we found that photograph of the latest baby of the family in its proud mother's arms and the gramophone record and the broken vase with the artificial flowers still in it—you remember what trophies they were to us—just there was the man. He was seated with his back propped up against the sand-bags where the two walls of the room make a corner, his legs angled out and his arms hanging limply down. It did not take a second glance to see that I had to do with a badly wounded German, but I took a look round first to make sure that there were no others either in the shell of the house or near it. When I had made certain, I returned to him and, putting my revolver within my reach on the floor beside me, knelt down and examined the man. He was plastered with mud, his cap was off his head, his breath was coming in little heavy jerks, and on the blue-grey uniform, just below the armpit on the right side, was a splash of blood mingling with the mud.

What I had done for your dead body I did for his barely living

one, opened the tunic and by the aid of my electric torch—it was safe enough in the angle of the walls—examined the wound. It did not need a doctor to see that the man's spirit was soon going to set out on the same voyage of adventure as yours, but I did what I could. I ripped my field dressing out of the lining of my coat and bound up the wound. Then I took out my flask and poured some brandy into his mouth. He had winced once or twice as I had dressed the wound but had not spoken; I think he was scarcely conscious.

But the spirit revived him and in a minute or so his eyes slowly opened and looked into mine. There was no such thing for him then as enemy or friend. He was simply a dying man and I was someone beside him helping him to die. His head turned over to one side and he murmured some German words. You used to laugh at me, Dick, for my hatred of the German language and my refusal to learn a word of it, but I wished heartily I knew some then. I answered him in English in the futile way one does. 'That's all right, old man,' I said. 'Feeling a bit easier now, eh?'

He looked at me fixedly for a moment or two and then suddenly summed up the International situation in a phrase.

'This damned silly war!' he said.

The remark, made with a strong German accent, was delivered with a little smile, and there was consciousness in his eyes. He finished it with a weary sigh and his hand moved slightly and rested on mine as I bent over him. There was a pool of water beside us in a hole in the hearth and I dipped my not too clean handkerchief in it and wiped some of the mud off his face. If I had felt any enmity against him for killing you, it was gone now. A war of attrition those beautiful war critics term it, and here was the attrition process in miniature. He had killed you and you had killed him, an officer apiece, and the Allies could stand the attrition longer than the Germans. I knew the argument and I have not the slightest doubt it is sound. In the meantime here was a man dying rather rapidly, very weary and only too ready for the last trench of all.

I chatted to him and have no notion what I said. I dare say it is a comfort to have, at the hour of death, a human being by you and a human voice speaking to you. He was quite conscious, the water on his face had refreshed him and had revealed clear-cut, aristocratic features, that had nothing bestial or cruel about them. Just as I had thought about you, so I thought about him. Waste! waste! I felt as though I had met him before, and certainly I knew

his type if not the individual. Perhaps too, sitting opposite one another week after week, in trenches two hundred yards apart, the spirits bridge a gap the bodies cannot. I do not know, I do not greatly care.

His voice was feeble, but he seemed to wish to speak to me and his English was that of an educated man, precise and at times idiomatic. He accounted for that almost in his first words.

'I have been in England on long visits, twice, three times,' he said. 'I like England. Germany and England are worth dying for. Also I am Saxon, and Saxony is a great country. Anglo-Saxons, is it not?'

'Anglo-Saxons,' I repeated lightly. 'We have the same blood in us.'

'Good blood, too,' he said, glancing down at the little splash of it on his tunic. 'A pity to spill so much. Will you bathe my face again, it helps me, and I would like to die clean.'

'Don't talk nonsense,' I said. 'To-morrow morning you will be in our lines—another man.' He did not answer for a moment, then he said, almost with humour in his voice, 'That is quite true, to-morrow morning I will surely be in your lines—a dead man.'

Again there was silence between us. He spoke the truth and knew that I knew it. His arm moved: the fingers of his hand pawed aimlessly at the rubble by his side. I half rose and told him that I was going to our breastworks to bring some bearers with a stretcher.

He shook his head and spoke in a voice almost strong. 'No, please, no! You shall go in half, in a quarter of an hour. I am quite easy here. In no great pain. Death is, sometimes, quite easy. I would like you to stay if you will.'

'Of course I will stay if you wish.'

'Yes. Also I would like to speak to you . . . I . . . I . . . killed . . . one of your officers . . . just now?'

'Yes,' I said.

'I . . . saw him fall. As he fell he fired at me too. I am sorry I killed him. Will you tell his . . . his . . . people so? And tell them, too, that it is just war . . . silly, wasteful war. He was a soldier, was he, by profession I mean?'

'Yes, a soldier.'

'Then it is his death . . . I am only a soldier as all of us are soldiers. In peace I make music, compose you call it. Music is better than war.'

'Far better,' I answered grimly enough.

'If I had lived I would have written great things. I had vowed it. I had in my head . . . I have it still . . . a . . . wonderful ballet. It would have been finer than Petrouchka—as great as *Cog-d'Or*. And the ballet of our enemies, the Russians, would have performed it. . . . Enemies! how silly it is.' He smiled.

My heart beat a little faster. This was madness, sheer madness, for us to be discussing music and the Russian ballet on the battlefield and with him dying. But at the words '*Cog-d'Or*' my memory had suddenly stirred, and I carried on the conversation eagerly.

'*Cog-d'Or* is wonderful, isn't it?' I said. 'Where have you seen it?'

'Where have I not?' he answered. 'In Moscow, Berlin, Paris, in London. It is great, astonishing.'

'In London?'

'But a short time ago—just before the war. I . . . I . . . had a friend. I was staying with him. He, too, was a soldier. I forget in what regiment. I was not interested in armies then.' He stirred uneasily and partially turned over on his side. I put my arm beneath him, moistened his lips with the water. He sighed and began to wander in his talk, the words German, beyond my comprehension. Yet one kept recurring that told me all, everything. He must not, should not die yet!

Only for a minute or two did his delirium last. Then his senses returned and quite suddenly he pressed my hand, and though his voice was fainter the words were distinct and spoken very slowly as though he wished to be sure I understood.

'I . . . I want you to do something for me. . . . I am sure you will. We are both gentlemen. . . .' His hand moved to his breast and he made as if to take something from his tunic.

'In the pocket of my coat, inside, there is a little leather case. Inside that . . . a photograph of a lady, of an English lady too.' (Oh! little world, O narrow little world!) 'It has been with me through the war. I dare not and would not have shown it to one of my comrades. . . . When I die I want you to take it out and send it to the Honourable Richard Belvoir. He was a lord's son, my friend, and the photograph is of his sister. I . . . she did not know it, you understand? . . . I loved her.'

Did she not? I wonder. My thoughts rushed back again to Drury Lane, to the crowded house, to the little quartette of us, you, I, the young Saxon, and Peggy, standing together in the foyer during the entr'acte. Every one of her twenty years had added something to her beauty, and as you and I strolled away and left

the other two together, I remember I wondered if we were making a proper division of the quartette and if it was quite fair to the Saxon to leave him to such an inevitable result. I spoke my thought to you and I recall your laughing comment.

Of course I promised to perform the simple duty the dying man gave me. I was glad he had not recognised me. It made the duty easier. Once I had spoken the promise he thanked me and seemed contented. He had little strength left and the end was very near. His body slipped lower down, he tried to speak no more—his breath came more feebly.

The next day we buried you and him side by side in the little clearing at the back of the road. In your pocket is the little leather case with your sister's photograph in it. I have given it to you as I was asked to do. The crosses in the clearing daily are added to in number. Some day your sister will come to visit the spot. I am writing to her telling her of your death and of the Saxon's too. But of how closely they hung upon each other I shall not speak. It is enough that she should think a strange chance brought you together in the same part of the line, that death came to both of you and that you now lie side by side.

Chance! What a word it is. It explains nothing, it evades all. I can imagine you, knowing now so much more than we do, smiling at the idea of such a thing as coincidence. I have said that I am weary beyond words of this war. I am sure you and the Saxon were weary of it too. I am not guessing, for I am in some way absolutely sure that the twin shots which disturbed the silence of the night were mercifully winged; that you and he, who must have had more in common than I knew, were sending each other unwittingly the final gift of good fellowship.

Good-night. I am sitting in the dug-out you and I shared. The sound of the artillery has died down. The divisional guns have fired their final salvos at the enemy's cross roads and dumps. The Germans for once have not even troubled to reply. Pip and Dennis are out with working parties. The new machine-gun emplacement on the right of Madden's mound, which you were so anxious to have finished, is done. Whatever you may say, I am still not sure that it is rightly placed. Perhaps you know that it does not matter where it is placed!

Some day, somewhere, we shall meet. Till then good-bye, Dick.

Yours ever

PHILIP.

THE PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLE: AN APPLICATION.

It was said of the historic centipede that he was so embarrassed by his multitude of legs that locomotion became impossible. Similarly perhaps it may be said of Pragmatism that it suffered principally from the numerous formulations of its principles, all of which sought to explain it, but many of which left it obviously unexplained. Perhaps that is the reason why the vogue which it had seven years ago, following upon Professor James' brilliant 'popular lectures,' was scarcely maintained. On the other hand, this was probably foreseen by some of the most loyal pragmatists. As one said of it, 'If Pragmatism is going to live and give life, it will be by its spirit and not by any magic contained in pragmatic dicta.' And it will be generally agreed that as a contribution to the thought of the twentieth century, it *has* lived and has perhaps quickened other established modes of thought and feeling. 'On the pragmatic side,' writes Professor James, 'we have only one edition of the universe, unfinished, growing in all sorts of places, especially in the places *where thinking beings are at work.*'

Meanwhile many people were at work endeavouring to compress the pragmatic point of view into a formula. The most generally accepted definition stated that it represented theory as subordinate to practice. Another popular formula gives it as the doctrine that the truth of an assertion is decided by its consequences. And again—this with the authority of Dr. Schiller—'the making of truth is necessarily and *ipso facto* also a making of reality.' But inasmuch as none of these definitions cover the whole ground, and as we are here concerned with a modern and vital application of the pragmatic issue, it may perhaps be worth our while to retrace the history of the matter in the first place to its source, craving the patience of the reader meanwhile.

In the year 1878, at Balliol, there were three men who were destined to exercise strong influence upon the intellectual life of their generation: Benjamin Jowett, the Master; Nettleship, the tutor; and Thomas Hill Green. 'I do not forget,' says Professor Wallace, in speaking of the last-named in the preface to his Hegel, 'what I and others owe to him,—that example of high-souled devotion to truth, and of earnest and intrepid thinking on the deep things of Eternity.' In his own day perhaps Green was

not greatly understood. He was known as the eccentric College tutor; a lecturer in metaphysics (and dry at that) 'Obscurum per obscurius,' said a witty undergraduate, though of course a witty undergraduate will say anything. Moreover an idealist, though a member of the City Council; a man of dreams, but a pioneer of evening schools for working men. Such was Green as Oxford knew him, but it is—briefly—with his position in philosophy that we are at the moment concerned.

Like all English idealists,—like Hegel also and the German School,—he built upon the rough foundations once laid down by the philosophers of Asia Minor. The Greeks had seen one thing plainly: that the spiritual entities of Science, Art, morality, or religion were of intrinsic value *in themselves* as expressions of the self-conscious spirit; but the one thing that lay hidden in the womb of Christianity they lacked, the conception of human brotherhood. So the philosophy of the later centuries, while still reaping where the ancient world had sown, has included the developed ideals of citizenship as well as the life of co-operation made possible therein. When we find one of Green's works headed 'Popular Philosophy in its Relation to Life,' we realise the gist of his teaching. He was in fact a practical mystic, which, as Lord Rosebery said of Cromwell, is a 'formidable combination.' To Green, the most solid and practical things about a man were the ideals which he put into practice. That in his philosophy was the one permanent use of any philosophical idea; *its working power as a basis for human effort*. It will be seen that here we are not very far off from those 'thinking beings at work' in the adventurous world of the pragmatist.

The idealism of Green was of a robuster type than some other kindred systems. He never maintained that we as human beings were unnecessary to the working out of the Divine plan. He never denied that by the application of human reason new possibilities may be brought to light, and that out of the treasure-house of the Eternal may be brought forth things at once old and new. And so, consistently, when we consider the personality of this man who was so vivid a directing force in thought and action, we find at the one end a professor of moral philosophy, and at the other the town councillor and worker in the slums.

Thus far Green and his influence in the English schools of 1878. But in that same year, in an American journal, there appeared an article by Charles Sanders Pierce, concerning 'our ideas and

"how to make them clear," and entitled 'The Principle of Pragmatism.'

The article did not attract very great attention on this side of the water. English scholars are apt to be a little shy of the swift and arresting methods of the American; and perhaps if pragmatism had remained the original contribution of Charles Sanders Pierce, it might have sunk into oblivion. But, as everybody knows, it found its 'vates sacer' in after years in the late Professor James of Harvard, who ushered it sixteen years ago, with some pomp and circumstance, into the world of English philosophy. Meanwhile, some apt maker of epigram, considering the works of Professor James and his brilliant brother, summed them up as 'the philosopher who writes novels, and the novelist who writes psychology.'

To do him justice, James said at the outset that pragmatism was no new thing. He took Aristotle indeed to his ancestor, and claimed relationship with the English idealists and even with Hume. He then, by virtue of his vivid and stimulating style, achieved for his subject a certain popularity, and a small following began to arise. When, however, people had learnt to speak of the British pragmatists, they discovered that the other people who spoke of the American pragmatists did not always seem to find their systems identical. And time has emphasised this difference. The pragmatism imported from America by Professor James has remained what it always professed to be—a method,—and, withal, a gentle and peaceable method,—not only of airing its own ideas, but of persuading everybody else that just as M. Jourdain had spoken prose all his life without knowing it, so they, too, had been pragmatists all their lives. The method is, perhaps, at times a little superior, and at times a little irreverent; nor can it clearly claim to have produced a 'philosophy' as such. It is, in truth, as its votaries have claimed, a spirit and an attitude towards philosophical problems and towards life. As such it would seem to be a characteristic product of the Anglo-Saxon genius which is essentially practical and values things for their use. 'In pragmatic principles,' says James, 'we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it.' And elsewhere, 'Beliefs are rules for actions.' And again, 'An idea is true so long as it is profitable to our lives to believe it.' In all these cases the act, the consequence, the deed are placed, so to speak, in the predicative position. The whole force of the sentence is concentrated upon the consequence, the

deed. 'The proof of the pudding,' says our homely proverb, 'is in the eating.' And we have been reminded that 'Honesty is the best policy' from our copy-book days. Here, however, there is a difference between the established ethic—whether idealistic or religious—and the pragmatic view. Honesty, it seems, would win the 'pragmatic sanction' because of its results:—it 'works' satisfactorily. Therefore it is 'true.' There is a shifting of attention from the intrinsic beauty of honesty as a virtue to its consequences; from its moral value to its face value; from the ideal to the actual and empirical. The impartial observer may come to the conclusion that after all the inquiry comes to the same thing. Honesty has been twice blessed: by the pragmatic sanction of its results, and by the moral sanction for those who identify the virtue with the moral imperative of religion. Nevertheless, this attitude of pragmatism is an exceedingly interesting one, and its application to human life and activities is undeniable. It is, in essence, the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, carried into the field of philosophy. The test of an idea, of an ideal, of a 'movement' is its working. If it worked well, it was fitted to survive; it was, at any rate, 'true' for the epoch wherein it did survive or flourish. On the other hand, a thing cannot be judged until it is tried. It must be known by its results. There must be evolution, shifting, experiment. 'The universe is always pursuing its adventures'; and truth is always 'in the making,'—especially where the 'thinking beings' are getting to work. Which brings us to the application aforesaid. For assuredly among all the many 'movements' which have stirred the surface of the body politic during the last forty years, the so-called 'woman's movement' may in its deeper aspects lay claim to the 'pragmatic sanction.' In it undoubtedly many thinking and adventurous persons have been at work. And there are passages in James' book speaking of 'our acts as the actual turning places in the great workshop of being where we catch truth in the making,' to which the hearts of many of our modern women doctors and nurses will respond. On the other hand, the attitude of the many who at every stage have sought to oppose a professional career for women has never been more aptly summed up than in the words of the pragmatist: 'They are simply afraid: afraid of more experience, afraid of life.'

A few years ago the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission published a weighty record of the usefulness of women in municipal work, suggesting further outlets for their energies; but

the writers certainly did not foresee the astonishing influx of female labour into the many departments of public service consequent upon the exigencies of the present time. On the face of it we must own that some of these occupations seem little suited to the worker's capacity. One can imagine the chorus of disapproval that would have risen from the ranks of the acutely feminine if such innovations as women postmen, 'bus conductors, and window-cleaners had offered themselves a few years ago. Even now it is probably only the most seasoned philosophers who regard them with perfect equanimity; the rest comfort themselves with the reflection that they are the unnatural products of an abnormal time: a sort of *epiphenomena* thrown up from an underworld of chaos and destined to disappear again in the natural course of things. There is little doubt that this will be so in the end. Post delivery and window cleaning will scarcely become common occupations for girls any more than it will be usual for them to go into the trenches in the firing line, as some gallant Russian women have been doing in order to succour the starving Poles. All these things are exceptional, and exceptional things are generally the outcome of a strong emotion. As Professor Jebb has observed, 'The feeling that covers a thousand square miles must, we instantly perceive, be a strong feeling.' We have had many opportunities for such observation during the present war, but nowhere more emphatically than among women. In adapting themselves to the requirements of social service they have taken to heart that excellent advice of Mr. Wells: they have 'flung themselves into their job, and have done it with passion.' But now after eliminating the exceptional, after allowing moreover for a natural ebb in the warm flowing tide of patriotic emotion, there undoubtedly remains a record of efficiency which is destined to have far-reaching results. The women whose former status in the industrial world was so precarious and unsatisfactory have now been swept into that world in increasing thousands because the industries of the country could not be maintained without them. The Government appeal of 1915 offered a curious comment upon the popular axiom that the woman's 'sphere is the home.' In the face of the wholesale slaughter of the bread-winners, and the consequent invitation to all unoccupied women to rise to the country's need, this unimpeachable motto has a pathetic look like that of a picture turned face to the wall. Pathetic because it was always true, even obviously true; but the relativity of truth makes so many isolated

truths look out of focus. Anyhow, the fact remains that, in this universe which just now is 'pursuing its adventures' at a remarkably accelerated pace, women have been called out of their homes into very unexpected places; and it is with the result that we are just now especially concerned. Evidence at first hand is not far to seek. It comes from all quarters, from the magnificently organised hospitals of the Scottish women in Serbia, from the railway companies, from the Women's Service Aircraft Department, from the engineers' shops in some of the industrial centres, and from the munition factories themselves. As to the hospitals, it is doubtful whether the public entirely realise the extent of the work that has been done.

At the Knightsbridge Exhibition in November 1915, one of the most interesting exhibits was that representing the Anglo-Russian hospital which, with its eight surgeons and thirty nurses, and complete unit of bedding and outfit, was sent as a gift to Petrograd; and several delightful articles have been written about the beautiful old Cistercian Abbey in Northern France which was turned into a hospital and staffed entirely by women for the necessities of the war. Of these institutions there has been an ever-increasing number both at home and abroad; one of the Suffrage societies has to its credit the financing and equipment of eight hospital units in France and Serbia. But all this is still the acknowledged sphere of women. As nurses and even doctors they are accepted as a matter of course by a generation which has scarcely heard of the criticisms once thrown at Florence Nightingale. It is in the other departments of social service that they are challenging the public estimates of their capacity, and here the facts must speak for themselves. Some of the factories have published statistics regarding their output of work; and the following comparisons were made in one of the engineers' shops of the Midland Railway Company.

Average percentage earned by men on Group No. 17 by the week, 42·5.

Average percentage earned by women on Group No. 17 by the week, 49·6.

The two hundred women thus employed had only lately displaced the male workers, and Sir Guy Granet, manager of the Midland Railway, remarked that 'the efficiency of women in certain directions had been a revelation to him.' Something must be added for the absence of any organised 'restrictions of outputs,' but in fact there has been a reiterated note of surprise in most of the testimonials to the women workers' capacity, as

though we were being faced with a new phenomenon, uncaused and spontaneous, instead of the outcome of underlying forces in the vanished world before the war.

'I am not sure,' wrote Mr. A. G. Gardiner in the *Daily News*, 'that the future will not find in the *arrival* of women the biggest social and economic result of the war. . . . Woman has won her place in the ranks beyond challenge.'

In Manchester, last June, one of the great attractions was the ploughing demonstration made by women 'on the land.' Lancashire criticism was sparing of words, but here again it was appreciative. 'Ay, they frame well,' said the men. The same results are recorded from clerks' offices, from the tramcars, from motor driving, and, perhaps most unexpectedly, from the factories where women are in charge of delicate and intricate machinery. In all these branches of manual and intellectual labour, the women workers have risen to their opportunities and have made good. The comment by *Punch* gave to the general view its own characteristic expression.

'Whenever he sees one of the new citizens or whenever he hears fresh stories of their ability Mr. Punch is proud and delighted. "It is almost worth having a war," he says, "to prove what stuff our women are made of. Not," he adds gallantly, "that it wanted proof."'

On the other hand, it must, we think, be admitted that proof was in fact the one essential thing which the world needed. On November 2, 1915, the Prime Minister, referring in the House of Commons to the death of Nurse Cavell, said:

'She has taught the bravest men among us a supreme lesson of courage. . . . In this United Kingdom there are thousands of such women, and a year ago *we did not know it*.'

At first sight the saying was a strange one, for the supreme crises of life are commonly those which call forth the highest response in human nature; but on reflection the words are just: we do not practically 'know' what we have not had an opportunity of proving. We had to wait for the experience furnished by a national crisis in opening the gates of industry to over three hundred thousand new recruits, bringing up the total of women workers, according to Mr. Sidney Webb's calculation, to six million and a half: figures and results which forced the Prime Minister at a later date into the acknowledgment that women's claim to the privileges of full citizenship was now 'unanswerable.'

'They have been put to many kinds of work,' said Mr. Webb,

'hitherto supposed to be within the capacity of men only, and they have done it on the whole successfully.'

Now, both these figures and these achievements must surely be recognised as a result of the trend of the last forty or fifty years. Without long preparation it could not have sprung into being. As the ripple is sustained by the weight of ocean, so the self-respecting work of the modern woman in the higher department of service has only been made possible by the education and tradition at her back; while even the factory worker has imbibed a sense of responsibility which is not the mark of the unfree. The new type is therefore, as is usual in the evolutionary process, found to be suited to its age. It was not enough that the women of the country should be, as always, eager to help, willing for sacrifice: it was necessary that they should have had the training in work, in business habits, and in self-control which gives to inherent good-will its market value.

Briefly then, we see in this record of women's service, which is coming as a surprise to many, an instance wherein the pragmatic philosophy has come to its own. In the early days of the Crimean War the people who were 'afraid of experience, afraid of life,' were shocked at the initiative of Florence Nightingale. No really 'nice' women, they said, would want to go out to nurse soldiers. The incredible insults heaped upon the first women doctors are remembered by many to-day. The advocates of the 'movement' were charged at every new departure with the desire to change the character of woman herself, whereas all that has been changed is her position in the national life; and that change has undoubtedly been rendered more conspicuous since the war.

To all reasonable persons, whether pragmatists or not, the record of experience is worth a great deal of theory. There are many cautious but fair-minded people who have regarded women's capacity for difficult administrative offices as unproven until now. There are many more who would have hastily judged them unfit for the responsible work which they are doing in the aircraft and munition departments. For all such there is a message in the principle of pragmatism. 'It preserves,' says its genial apologist, 'a cordial relation with facts. . . . The pragmatist turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power. . . . That means the open air and possibilities of nature as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth.'

And Truth, to quote again from a former passage, can just now be vividly observed 'in the making' in the great workshop of the world. She can be caught in the grip of the philosopher, and submitted to the most searching inquiry which the mind of man can desire: she can be traced through the past, as Green desired to trace her, to her eternal source in the 'ideas' which are a 'basis for human effort': she can be brought to the bar of Reality. In this way, it may be added, the method of Pragmatism may exercise a wholesome bracing effect upon one's thought. It clears away the cobwebs of abstractions; it watches Truth at its daily work in particulars whence only careful generalisations should be drawn. It brings all theory to the test of experiment. And finally recurring to our starting point, it lays stress upon the power of every idea in action, insisting upon the vital correlation of thought and deed. For in the words of the old Greek dramatist,¹ 'The word and the deed should be present as one thing, to dispatch that end whereto the counselling mind moveth.'

LESLIE KEENE.

¹ Aeschylus.

THE BRITISH RED CROSS IN ITALY.

BY LEWIS R. FREEMAN.

For the first time in a fortnight there had been a few hours of really good visibility, and, as a consequence, the artillery of both sides were endeavouring to make up for lost time with an increase of activity, just as a pet Pomeranian begins to cut capers the instant it is freed from its restraining leash. For some reason, a goodly share of the Austrian fire appeared to be directed to the vicinity of a certain road along which we had to pick our way in returning from an advanced Italian position we had just visited.

A road under heavy gun fire is not a comfortable place to be at large upon on any of the battle fronts of Europe, and least of all that of the stony Carso, where flying rock fragments increase the casualties three and four-fold over what they would be if the hurtling shells were burying themselves in eight or ten feet of soft earth before accumulating enough resistance to detonate their charges of high explosive. The 'cave-men' who held the plateau had all disappeared into their burrows on the 'lee' side of the *dolinas* or sink-holes which pit the repulsive face of the Carsic hills, but here and there along the road there were evidences—mostly pools of blood and scattered kit—that some whom recklessness or duty had kept from cover had met with trouble. Plainly there was going to be work for the Red Cross, and one of the first things I began to wonder about after we had passed on to the comparative shelter of a side-hill, was whether or not they would see fit to risk one of their precious ambulances up there on the shell-torn plateau where, from the rattle and roar, it was evident that, in spite of the failing light, things were going to be considerably worse before they began to be better. Picking up our waiting car in the niche of a protecting cliff, we coasted down across the face of a hillside honey-combed with dug-outs to the bottom of a narrow valley, a point which appeared, for the time being at least, the 'head of navigation' for motor traffic. Here we found ourselves stopped by the jam that had piled up on both sides of a hulking '210' that was being warped around a 'hairpin' turn. Suddenly I noticed a commotion in the wriggling line of lorries, carts, and pack-mules that wound down from the farther side of the jam, and presently there wallowed

into sight a couple of light ambulances, plainly—from the purposeful persistence with which they kept plugging on through the blockade—on urgent business.

Now the very existence of a jam on a road is in itself evidence of the fact that there is an *impasse* somewhere, and until this is broken the confusion only becomes confounded by any misdirected attempts to push ahead from either direction. But the ambulance is largely a law unto itself, and when it signals for a right-of-way there is always an attempt to make way for it where any other vehicle (save, of course, one carrying reinforcements or munitions at the height of a battle) would have to wait its turn. Mules and carts and lorries crowded closer against each other or edged a few more precarious inches over the side, and by dint of good luck and skilful driving, the two ambulances finally filtered through the blockade and came to a halt alongside our waiting car on the upper end. Then I saw that their cool-headed young drivers were dressed in khaki, and knew, even before I read in English on the side of one of the cars that it was the gift of some Indian province—that they belonged to a unit of the British Red Cross.

'Plucky chaps those,' remarked the Italian officer escorting me. 'Ready to go anywhere and at any time. But it's hardly possible they're going to venture up on to the plateau while that bombardment's going on. That's work for the night-time, after the guns have quieted down. But there is one of them coming back now; perhaps they're going to discuss the situation before going on.'

I leaned out to eavesdrop on that momentous debate, and this is what I heard:

'Jolly awful tobacco this,' said the one on the ground, after filling his pipe from his companion's pouch.

'Poisonous,' agreed the other, 'and nothing better in sight for a week. Your engine isn't missing any more, is it?'

'Nu-u,' mumbled the first, continuing to puff at the pipe he was lighting. 'Goin'—like a—top.'

'Right-o, then; better be getting on.'

'Hu-u'; and so the 'discussion' ended.

Without another word the boy on the ground pulled on his gloves, walked back to his car, cranked up, climbed into his seat, and led the way off up the empty road.

'They're not much on "dramatics," these young Britons,' said my companion, 'but they're always on hand when they're wanted, and they take danger and emergencies—and there isn't much else

to work on the Carso—just about as much of a matter of course as they do afternoon tea. The actual work they've done for us here with their ambulances and hospital has been very considerable ; but even more importance attaches to the fact that they have come to stand in the minds of the Italian army as the tangible expression of British sympathy for our country. The good they have done, and will continue to do, on this score is beyond reckoning.'

It has been well said, now that the absolute superiority of the Allies in men, material, and *moral* has been established beyond a doubt, that the only eventuality that can conceivably intervene to prevent their obtaining a sweeping victory over the Central Powers is one which might arise as a consequence of trouble among themselves. It is for this reason that every effort calculated to promote better feeling between, and a fuller appreciation of each other's efforts and ideals among, the various peoples of the Entente nations is so highly desirable ; and it is on this account that the work of the British Red Cross Mission to Italy has an importance incalculably greater than that which attaches to it merely as a material contribution.

The work of this Mission comes nearer, perhaps, to being a pure labour of love than any other comprehensive piece of international effort called forth by the war. Duty, sympathy, pity—these are the mainsprings of the American Commission for Belgian Relief, and the splendid work is carried on by men to whom Belgium was but little more than a name before the invading Germans began trampling it under foot ; and in the American ambulances and flying squadron in France the spirit of adventure vies with affection for France in bringing those devoted workers and fighters across the sea. The Red Cross and other British work for the comfort and welfare of the Italian army is almost entirely under the direction of those who have seized the opportunity to pay back with present effort the accumulated debts of past years of residence or study in a country which occupies only a lesser place in their hearts, and a slighter claim on their services, than their own.

Mr. George M. Trevelyan, essayist and historian and author of the works on the life of Garibaldi, had been with the Relief Committee in Servia prior to Italy's entry into the war. As soon as that event took place he hastened to England, and was fortunately able to unite the efforts of a number of persons, all equally anxious to demonstrate in a practical form their friendship for Italy. There resulted the

formation of a Red Cross ambulance unit for service on the Italian front. With the help of the British Red Cross authorities at home, and Lord Monson, their Commissioner in Italy, this unit came out in September 1915, under Mr. Trevelyan as commandant; forming the original nucleus of the present Mission of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John, which, united under the direction of Lt.-Col. Lord Monson, now consists of three ambulance and two X-ray units and an English-staffed hospital of 110 beds. Two other hospitals of 320 and 150 beds respectively are also being equipped for the Italian Sanitary Service.

From the inception of the movement all of the British residents in Italy threw themselves into it heart and soul; and not only these, but also those then resident in England who, through past acquaintance or study, felt that the land of Michael Angelo and Raphael, of Dante and Tasso, of Garibaldi and Mazzini, was deserving of a fitting testimonial of sympathy. Voluntary contributions of money and service poured in for the Red Cross Mission from all sides, while various auxiliary organisations were formed to help in other ways. Over 20,000 garments and over 12,000 bandages have been made in the Joint War Committee's ten War Hospital Supply Depots in Italian cities, where 500 ladies are engaged in making comforts for the sick and wounded. The total of garments supplied through the Commissioner's Stores Department is in excess of 60,000, and that of bandages 113,000. A number of *Posti di Ristoro*, or refreshment depots, are conducted by English ladies at various railway stations near and on the way to the front, while more recently a movement has been inaugurated for starting a system of recreation huts patterned after those conducted with such success by the Y.M.C.A. in France and Flanders.

To return to the Red Cross work. Mr. Trevelyan's pioneer unit is the largest of the three now in operation. It consists of an 110-bed hospital, working as a regular part of the Italian army corps, and of some thirty ambulances and twelve other cars, which are attached to several army corps in Gorizia and neighbourhood. The hospital is under the charge of Dr. George S. Brock, the medical doctor of the British Embassy in Rome, and Colonel Sir Alexander Ogston, the celebrated Scotch surgeon, and Dr. W. E. Thompson of Edinburgh. The personnel of the hospital consists of about twenty English nurses, the matron, Miss Power, having marched through the snow in the retreat of the Servian army, with which she worked in 1915. There are sixty English drivers and mechanics, one of

whom has been severely wounded and another slightly. The King of Italy has made personal presentation of the Silver Medal for Military Valour to the commandant as a testimony to the services of the whole unit under fire during its year and a half of service on the Italian front.

The Second Unit, with a smaller number of cars, under the command of Mr. F. Sargent, has been working in the rough and difficult Carnic Alps for fifteen months. This is the most isolated of all the units, and its work under conditions calling for unusual resource and initiative has resulted in its being commended in a special Order of the Day issued by General Lequio, who at the time commanded the unit to which it is attached. This, the highest honour an Italian General can confer on the troops under his command, reads as follows :

‘ H.Q. CARNIA ZONE,
July 23, 1916.

‘ General Orders N. 72.

‘ I wish to draw the attention of the troops under my command to the courageous behaviour, the never-failing cheerfulness, and the single-hearted devotion of the officers and men of the British Red Cross Unit serving in the Carnia Zone.

‘ This Unit, which arrived at Tolmezzo on October 26, 1915, has from that date worked with untiring zeal and devotion. Wherever duty has called its members—in the neighbourhood of the first lines, frequently under heavy bombardment—they have one and all devoted themselves to the removal of our wounded who were exposed to the merciless fire of the enemy’s artillery.

‘ It is, therefore, a great pleasure to me to confer on them all *l’encomio solenne*, adding thereto my sincerest good wishes and gratitude.

‘ (Signed) C. LEQUIO,
‘ *Lieut.-General Commanding.*’

Mr. Douglas Cooper, of this unit, has received the Bronze Medal for Military Valour for his services under fire.

The ambulances of the Third Unit, which is under the command of Mr. F. Alexander, were a gift of the British Coal Owners’ and Miners’ Committee for service in Italy. This unit has now completed a year of service on the Carso front, especially distinguished for the extremely heavy fighting which has taken place there. No more conclusive proof is required of the high opinion held by the Italian Sanitary Service of the judgment and consideration of the

British driver than the fact that over one-third of the wounded carried by the ambulances of this Third Unit have been stretcher cases.

The Fourth Unit is a radiographic one, under the joint command of Countess Helena Gleichen and Mrs. Hollings, who realised early in the war the incalculably valuable work that radiography could fulfil in the immediate vicinity of the front. The apparatus, which combines both power and mobility, is one of the most up-to-date yet devised. For over a year now, without the briefest leave of absence, these ladies have carried on their work close up to the firing line, where their devotion, unselfishness, and disdain of all danger have won for them the Italian Bronze Medal for Military Valour, to say nothing of the undying gratitude, not alone of the wounded who have passed through their hands, but of the whole army corps under whose eyes they have laboured.

The Fifth Unit, recently formed, is also devoted to 'close-up' radiography. It is under the command of Mr. Cecil Pisent.

The following grimly amusing, but highly illuminative anecdote is told to illustrate the resourcefulness and energy of the British ambulance driver in an emergency hardly covered by his instructions or previous experience.

One of the voluntary drivers was bringing down, over an especially difficult piece of road, an ambulance full of wounded from a lofty sector of the Alpine front, when he encountered a soldier in a desperate condition from a gaping bullet-wound in the throat. Realising that the man was in imminent danger of bleeding to death, the driver lifted the inert body to his seat, propping it up the best he could next to where he sat behind his steering-wheel. Driving with his right hand, while with a finger of his left he maintained a firm pressure on the severed carotid artery, he steered his ambulance down the slippery, winding mountain road to the clearing station at the foot of the pass. The laconic comment of the astonished but highly pleased Italian doctor on the incident was direct but comprehensive.

'Well, young man,' he said, as he took hasty measures further to staunch the gushes of blood, 'you've saved his life, but in five minutes more you would have throttled him.'

It will hardly be necessary to enlarge on the effect upon the Italian wounded of the devoted care they have received while in charge of the British Red Cross Ambulance and Hospital Units; nor yet on the admiration awakened throughout the Italian army

by the presence in their midst of these quietly energetic and modestly brave workers of mercy. Reciprocally, too, it has given to hundreds (to be passed on to thousands) of Britons an experience of Italian courage and fortitude which could never have been gained except through the medium of hospital and ambulance work. I do not believe I have heard a finer tribute of one Ally to another than that which a member of the British Red Cross Mission paid to the Italians as he had observed them under the terrible trial of the especially aggravated Austrian gas attack of June 30, 1916.

'The gas employed on this occasion,' he said, 'was the deadliest of which there has been any experience; much deadlier than the Germans employed against us at Ypres. It was, as General Cadorna's dispatch admitted, very destructive of life, although the valour of the Italian soldier prevented the enemy from reaping any military advantage from the foul sowing. Our cars were summoned early, and we worked all night at Sagrado. The trenches on the Carso were at that time close at hand, and the soldiers who were not overcome at their posts came staggering into the hospitals for many hours after the horror was released. Several hundred of them died that night in the court and garden.

'It was a scene of heartrending suffering—much the same sort of horror the British went through in Flanders a year before—and the Italians were, very naturally, in a rage with the savagery of the Austrian methods of war. If there ever was a moment when they might have been capable of cruelty or roughness with their prisoners, this was the one when their fury would have carried them away. Their comrades, racked with unspeakable agony, were dying around them by scores. Yet even on that night I observed with admiration that they medicated the Austrian wounded prisoners with exactly the same kindness and attention they showed to their own, passing them on to our waiting cars in due time without injury or insult.'

Under the leadership of Geoffrey Young, Alpine climber and poet, the ambulances of the British Red Cross were the first motor vehicles to enter Gorizia following its capture in August 1916. Perhaps I cannot convey a better idea of the conditions under which the drivers work, and the spirit in which that work is carried out, than by quoting from Mr. Young's report to Mr. Trevelyan, the commander of his unit, a copy of which has kindly been put at my disposal.

'On August 8, 6.30 P.M.,' he writes, 'I picked up at Lucinico and carried back two cavalry officers, still wet from the ride across the Isonzo. All August 9 Bersaglieri, &c., passed, moving on to cross the river. At 7.50 P.M. Captain Z——, who had just moved with us from the Osteria to Vallisella, informed me that he had an urgent call from Gorizia to fetch in cavalry wounded. He asked me if I could get an ambulance across. I selected the light touring car, loaded with bandages (Driver Sessions), and the Ford Ambulance, as that could pass where heavier cars might not be able to; also the Crossley (Watson) as the next in size, and the No. 14 Buick, in case the bridge would allow it.

'... The roads were still full of shell holes and blocked by munition carts and guns. We reached the Iron Bridge just as darkness fell. Here the cars had to halt, as the holes in the bridge were making it necessary to unharness the artillery horses and man-handle the guns across. At the worst passages the shells were being unloaded from the carts and reloaded beyond the obstacles.

'I walked across ahead by moonlight. Every ten feet or so there were shell breaches through the bridge. At night it was next to impossible to see them, and even after some twenty crossings I found the greatest circumspection necessary. In various places soldiers, mules, and carts severally fell through during the night. In two places nearly two-thirds of the bridge had been blown away, leaving only narrow passages along the edge. These were slightly but insecurely inclosed by a few loose planks. Again and again the heavy artillery carts broke through, gradually paring away the edge of the remaining galleries. Each of our cars had to be piloted across on foot, inch by inch. In the block it was impossible to keep them together . . . and long waits and many retraversings were necessary before all four were steered safely over. There had been no time as yet even to clear away the bodies of the soldiers killed in the first passage of the morning.

'We then wound up into the town, again impeded by shell holes in the road, fallen trees, and by remains of carts, horses, and mules. The town was utterly deserted. The only occupation was by squadrons of cavalry. The Austrians were still being cleared out of the outskirts, and stray bullets announced any open gaps in the line of houses to the east of us.

'We traversed the town in convoy, visiting the Municipio and the principal Piazzas. We failed to find any cavalry aid post with wounded. We were informed by a colonel of cavalry, who received us most cordially, that no aid-posts had as yet been established, and that we were the first motor ambulances to cross the bridge.

'In passing and repassing, however, we had constant appeals from the corner-posts of regimental stretcher-bearers, and had soon filled our ambulance with wounded and distributed most of the stores of bandages, &c., with which the touring car had been loaded.

'We then started to return. The moon had now sunk. The gaps in the Iron Bridge had opened farther. The traffic was all from the other bank, and the munition carts were all successively breaking through and necessitating lengthy rescue operations. It was fully an hour before I secured passage for the touring car. Sessions then returned with me to drive the Ford Ambulance. Another hour passed before he could be started. I left him half-way across, and returned to fetch the other cars. On recrossing I found the Ford with one wheel through. Sessions' coolness and the car's lightness enabled us to extract the latter and its load. It was then clear that passage for a wider car had now become impossible. On our return on foot we saw that another portion of one of the narrow galleries had opened out (the footway separating from the roadway), carrying with it a mule. No course lay open but to leave the heavier cars, with their wounded, on the Gorizia side, and to try to get the others back to Vallisella, returning later with another car to which the wounded could be carried across the bridge. The night was cold, and we left all available coats, &c., to cover the wounded in their long wait. The drivers accepted the situation with the coolness one could expect from them.

'On reaching the Italian side again we found a block, three carts wide, extending back almost to Lucinico. We were forced to abandon, therefore, the remaining Ford Ambulance, for which it proved impossible to make a passage. After a few hundred yards of slow progress in the block, the touring car fell over the side of the road into a shell hole. It was extricated, but a few yards further the block became impracticable. We left it, half in a trench, and walked to Vallisella. On the way we met our two remaining cars, loaded with the material of the hospitals to which we were attached, also completely locked in the block.

'At Vallisella we filled rucksacks with food and thermos, and with our adjutant, Kennedy, to help, trudged back for the bridge. Fortunately, our tramp-like appearance only led to one "hold-up" in the kindly darkness.

'My anxiety to return was emphasised by the certainty that the Austrians would begin shelling the bridge as soon as daylight revealed the block. Day broke as we approached it. The risk had also appealed to the drivers, and we met the lorries, cars, &c., all breaking out of the jam and racing for the cover of Lucinico.

Glaisyer was able to move off just as we reached him. The two cars that were still on the near side got down to the protection of the Galleria with their hospital staff.

'As I walked up to the bridge, I was just in time to see Woolmer ably rushing the Crossley over the holes, across which the Genio had thrown a few loose planks and beams. The heavier Buick had to be carefully piloted over, Christie winding through the gaps and rushing the awkward narrow traverses with skill and nerve. The Buick was the last heavy car to recross before the bridge, under fire, was repaired about mid-day. It had also been the first to cross.

'We were barely clear of the bridge—perhaps four minutes—when the first big shell exploded at the Italian end.'

From the time of the capture of Gorizia down to the present the cars of the First Unit have been stationed there, picking up their wounded within a mile of the Austrian first-line trenches. At the time of my visit to the British Red Cross Hospital one of the drivers had just suffered a broken leg and other injuries sustained when the walls of his quarters in Gorizia were blown down upon him by an Austrian shell.

'They're talking about sending me home on a bit of a leave to rest up a bit,' he told me; 'but—much as I should like to go—I'm not too keen on it. It's more men we need here, rather than less. So, unless they insist upon it, I think my leave can wait better than our wounded.'

That seems to me fairly typical of the spirit imbuing every member of the Mission with whom I talked.

UNCONQUERED: AN EPISODE OF 1914.¹

BY MAUD DIVER.

CHAPTER XIII.

'I am the Fact,' said War, 'and I stand astride the path of Life. . . . There can be nothing else and nothing more in human life until you have reckoned with me.'—H. G. WELLS.

THAT same evening, a good deal later on, Lady Forsyth sat at her dressing-table, brushing out her hair, recalling, with pride, Mark's vivid speech, the cheers, the record 'bag' of recruits, and wondering if he would forget to come for his usual good-night.

His room opened out of hers; and the door between stood chronically ajar—a companionable habit begun in her first days of loneliness after his father's death. He rarely missed the little ceremony of early tea, when he would establish himself at the foot of the bed and argue, or read aloud, or simply 'rag' her, as the spirit moved him. Then he would wander in and out, in the later stages of dressing, hindering and delighting her in about equal measure. Or they would carry on a violent argument through the open door, a pair of disembodied voices, till some climax would bring one or other gesticulating to the threshold. These morning and evening hours were the times of their most formidable encounters, their wildest nonsense, their utmost joy in each other's society, exhibited in a manner peculiar to themselves. At night the 'hair-brush interview' had become a regular institution. It might be over in ten minutes or last till midnight, according to their mood. This was the time for graver matters, for the give and take of advice; and although there might be little outward show of sentiment, those hours of comradeship were among the most sacred treasures of the mother's heart.

To-night she brushed till her arm ached, listening for his footstep; and the moment she put the hated thing down, he came, bringing with him the whiff of cigarette smoke she loved.

Standing behind her, he took her head between his hands, lightly passed his fingers through her hair and smiled at her in the glass. She was responsive as a cat when her hair was caressed; and he knew it.

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'Poor deserted little Mums!' he said. 'Had you given me up in despair?'

'Absolutely.'

'And how long would you have hung on past despair point?' he asked with a twinkle.

'Probably half an hour. . . . What have you done with your lady-love?'

'Ordered her to bed.'

'So early? All for my benefit? I scent an ulterior motive.'

He laughed and pulled her hair. 'Your instinct's infallible! It's this marrying business. I know I promised to wait; but the whole face of the world has changed since then.'

He detected the faint compression of her lips.

'Mums, you're incorrigible. She's a delicious thing.'

'Who says otherwise?'

'You do—internally! Not a mite of use throwing dust in my eyes. When you're converted I shall know it, to the tick of a minute. Meantime'—he moved over to the window and stood there facing her—'the question is, in a war like this, oughtn't one to marry, if possible, before going out? She got on to war weddings this evening, and I was tongue-tied. That mustn't happen again. What's your notion? D'you still think—wait?'

A pause. She dreaded, as he did, the possibility of Wynchcombe Friars passing into the hands of Everard Forsyth and his son, whose views were not their views, except in matters political. Had the wife in question been Sheila, her answer would have been unhesitating. As it was, she parried his awkward question with another.

'What do you think yourself, Mark?'

He laughed.

'Oh, you clever woman! I have my answer. And in this case . . . I believe you're right. Personally, I'm game to marry her at once. But . . . there *are* other considerations. Seems her precious Harry's been rubbing into her that these war marriages aren't fair on women—that it's a bigger shadow on their lives losing a husband than a lover. It's a tragic sort of start, I admit; and once we're married the wrench of separation would surely be harder for both. Then, as regards myself, *you* know how this coming struggle has obsessed my mind; how we've doubted, both of us, the spirit of modern England—the selfish, commercial spirit of the red-necktie brand. And now that I see the old country shaming

our doubts, I simply want to fling myself into this business—heart and brain and body. And, frankly, I've a feeling I could give myself to things with a freer mind . . . as a bachelor. That's the truth—for your very private ear. Thirdly and lastly, if we married, she ought to be here with you. And I'm doubtful if you'd either of you relish that arrangement, lacking me to do buffer state. See ?'

'I do see, very clearly,' she answered, smiling at him with grave tenderness, her elbows on the table, her chin in her hands.

'Thought you would. There's only one thing worries me. As my wife—if the worst happened, she'd at least be well provided for. Seems she has literally no money, and a very fair gift for spending it.'

Helen's quick brain—lightened by her relief—sprang to instant decision. 'You could settle that by adding a codicil to your will. Those investments of father's that are not tied up with the place would give her quite a comfortable income.'

'Capital! Fool I was not to think of it. Simply forestall my instructions about her marriage settlement. We'll fix it up at once and I'll talk things over with her to-morrow. See how she feels about it herself.'

They discussed details for another half-hour; then, in his peremptory fashion, he ordered her to bed.

'God bless you,' she whispered as he shed a kiss on her hair. 'This afternoon I was the proudest mother in England.'

'O fool woman—just because I've caught the gift of the gab! With practice I might even degenerate into a politician. Just as well I'm in for a few years of the silent service. Go to sleep quick, and don't let yourself be bogey-ridden by German devilments.'

But though wisdom endorsed his command, she disobeyed it flatly. There was no sleep in her brain; and instead of going to bed, she sat down in the window-seat, leaned against the woodwork and looked out upon the still serenity of garden, terrace and pine-wood, softly illumined by an unclouded moon. The very peace and beauty of those moonlit August nights had an uncanny power of intensifying the inner visions that daylight and ceaseless occupation kept partially in check. She could not now look upon the moon without seeing the sacked villages, the human wreckage of battle that the same impartial goddess illumined, over there, on the shell-battered fields of Belgium and France.

Earlier in the day her spirit had been uplifted by Miss Sorabji's beautiful letter 'England in Earnest'; by her exhortation, from the Gita, 'Think of this not as a war, but as a sacrifice of arms demanded of the gods.' But now, in the peace and silence of night, it was the anguish of the flight from Tirlemont that lived before her eyes and chilled her blood. Too vividly, she pictured the flaming town; the rush of panic-stricken people; women and children, shot, bayoneted, ruthlessly ridden down. And already there were whispers of things infinitely worse than killing—things unnamable, at thought of which imagination blanched——

From that great, confused mass of misery there emerged the pathetic figure of one fugitive peasant woman and five children who stood bewildered in the Place de la Gare, crying all of them as if their hearts would break. That morning the German soldiery had killed the woman's husband and trampled two of her children to death before her face—a minor item in an orgy of horrors. But it is the poignant personal detail that pierces the heart: and the acute realisation of one mother's anguish brought sudden tears to Helen's eyes.

So blurred was the moonlit garden, when she looked down into it, that a shadow moving at the end of the terrace set her heart fluttering in her throat.

Spy hunting and spy mania were in the air. Almost every day brought its crop of tales, credible and incredible: horses poisoned wholesale at Aldershot, mysterious gun-emplacements, hidden arms and ammunition in the least expected places. Even allowing for exaggeration, these tales were sufficiently disturbing. They gave a creepy, yet rather thrilling sense of insecurity to things as perennially and unshakably secure as the Bank of England or Westminster Abbey. Nor could even those symbols of stability be reckoned immune, with the financial world in convulsions and a mysterious fleet of Zeppelins threatening to bombard London!

In the over-civilised and over-legislated world that came by a violent end in July 1914, the uncertainty of life had been little more than a pious phrase, spasmodically justified by events. Now it was an impious fact, vaguely or acutely felt almost every hour of the day—by none more acutely than by Helen Forsyth with her quick sensibilities and vivid brain. Even Mark admitted that she was keeping her head creditably on the whole; but in certain moods she was capable of demanding a drastic search for gun-emplace-

ments in her own grounds or suspecting a secret store of ammunition among the ruins of Wynchcombe Abbey, all on the strength of a semi-German gardener dismissed years ago. Only last week a suspicious, Teutonic-looking individual had come to the back door and put the cook 'all in a tremor' by asking superfluous questions about the neighbourhood. And now this mysterious wanderer in the garden—at such an hour——!

She was on her feet, brushing aside the tears that obscured her vision. But the shadow had vanished behind a bush and did not seem disposed to reappear. For a second she stood hesitating. If she called Mark, he would either laugh at her or scold her for not being in bed. The creature was probably harmless. She would creep downstairs quietly and explore. For all her nerves and fanciful fears, she was no coward in the grain. Hastily twisting up her hair, she slipped on a long opera coat and crept noiselessly down into the drawing-room. There she found that the French window leading on to the terrace had been left unlocked.

'How careless of Mark!' she murmured; and, with fluttering pulse, stepped out into the moonlight.

There he was again! Summoning all her courage she went forward, uncertain even now what she meant to say.

The shadowy figure had turned. It was coming towards her. Then—with a start of recognition she stopped dead.

'Keith!' she exclaimed softly, and could have laughed aloud in her relief.

'Helen—what are you doing out here?' he asked, an odd thrill in his low voice.

'What are *you* doing?' she retorted. 'Frightening me out of my life! I saw a suspicious-looking shadow; and—don't laugh at me—I thought it might be a spy.'

'And you came down to tackle him alone! Just like you. Supposing it had been?'

'Oh—thank goodness it's not! But don't you ever give me away.' Helen's laugh ended in an involuntary shiver.

'Cold?' he asked quickly.

'No—no. Let's walk a little and feel normal.'

He moved on beside her, anxious, yet deeply content. Then: 'Helen,' he said suddenly, 'if you're going to let things get on your nerves like this, you'll be done for. Your best chance is to take up some absorbing war-work; the harder the better.'

'What work? And where?' He caught a note of desperation

in her tone. 'Scrubbing hospital floors? Or playing about with Belgians and invalids here, while Sheila is at Boulogne, you scouring France in our car, and Mark in the thick of it all? He wants me to stay here, I know. But, Keith, I simply *can't*. What else, though, can a useless woman of fifty do?'

'To start with, she can refrain from calling herself useless, which is a libel! To go on with——' He paused, regarding her. The supposed spy was meditating a bold suggestion. 'Helen—could you . . . would you . . . come out with me as my orderly? If so, I could confine my activities to the Base. I verily believe you'd find the real thing less nerve-racking than the nightmares of an imagination like yours. But, could you stand it, physically? And . . . would the conventions permit?'

Her low laugh answered him straight away. 'My dear Keith, talk of inspiration! It would just save my soul alive. I can act infinitely better than I can endure. I should feel nearer to Mark. And as for the conventions, I hanged them all years ago. What harm, if the poor dead things are drawn and quartered?' She checked herself and looked up at him. 'Will you take your Bible oath that I shouldn't simply be in the way?'

'I'll take it on as many Bibles as you like to produce,' he answered, with becoming gravity. 'But I'm thinking . . . for your sake . . . another woman. . . . How about Sheila?'

'Sheila! Lovely.'

'Would she give up her precious massage?'

'If I wanted her, she'd give up anything. But—the massage wouldn't bring her up against the worst horrors. Your work would. And she's full young—barely three and twenty.'

'She is that. Though, if I'm any good at observation, I should say the stature of her spirit is far in advance of her years. She gives me the impression of great reserve power, that girl. She never seems to put out her full strength, or to waste it in kicking against the pricks.'

'One for me!' Lady Forsyth murmured meekly.

'Yes, one for you! And I make bold to prophesy she would be worth five of you in a painful emergency.'

He made that unflattering statement in a tone of such extraordinary tenderness that she beamed as at a compliment.

'Let the righteous smite me friendly—when I deserve it! You seem to have made a close study of my Sheila. It only remains to secure her services and Mark's consent——'

'Mother!' His deep voice called suddenly from the window. 'I'm ashamed of you. Come in at once!'

'Coming!' she called back, adding under her breath: 'Keith, remember I only came down for a book. And you found me locking you out.'

Then she hurried away, obedient always to the voice of her son. Nightmares had been effectually dispelled.

Bel's hope that the War Office would be merciful was not fulfilled. The Great Man, who worked day and night, creating new armies, had need of every promising semblance of an officer he could lay hands on; and Mark's name was a recommendation in itself.

Bel was given little more than a week in which to be 'heavenly good'; and it must be admitted that she made the most of it. She took kindly, on the whole, to Mark's solution of the marriage problem. How far her acquiescence was due to his exceeding thoughtfulness in the matter of money it might be invidious to inquire. There remained the fact that Harry O'Neill—scenting a possible war wedding—had skilfully put forward her own pronounced views on the subject; while, incidentally, spoiling her idol more egregiously than ever. And the girl herself leaned towards a more auspicious beginning of her married life. Mark found her oddly superstitious on the subject; and, with her gift for evading unpleasant facts, she had risen readily to the optimistic conviction that the war would be over by Christmas or the New Year. Apparently it did not occur to her, or to others of her persuasion, that a short war could only mean victory for Germany. But there seemed little use in dispelling an illusion that kept her happy; and, in her case, could do no harm.

So she clung unchallenged to her comforting belief; and, the great question being settled, Mark was free to consider other matters.

To start with, there was Keith's amazing proposition to enlist Mums—a project that did not square with Mark's private plan for keeping her safely wrapped in cotton wool and harmless war-activities at Wynchcombe Friars. Son-like, he had scarce realised how infinitely dear she was to him, till her eagerness to cross the Channel had driven him to consider the possibility in all its bearings. And the inclusion of Sheila in the programme brought to light his hidden tenderness for her that seemed in no way diminished by his passion for Bel. Why the deuce couldn't the women be reasonable,

and stay in England where there would be work enough for all? And what business had Keith to go encouraging them? But so plainly were the three enamoured of their idea that in the end he had not the heart to damp them.

In the privacy of his thoughts, he thanked goodness that Bel could be trusted not to emulate them; though her attitude towards the war was now less hostile than it had been. The very air she breathed was impregnated with war-fever, war-talk and war-realities. It was increasingly evident that new activities were going to become the fashion; and she was of those who unquestioningly follow a fashion, lead it where it may. Having no taste for the menial work of hospitals or for tending the sick and wounded, she had elected to help in some sort of women's work engineered by Harry, 'the Cause' being temporarily extinct. So far as possible she turned away her eyes from beholding and her heart from feeling the full measure of the invisible horror, which, to more imaginative minds, became too acutely visible and audible during that critical last week of August 1914.

For by now, across the Channel, the Great Retreat had begun. Days that, at Wynchcombe Friars, slipped by all too fast, seemed over there, to have neither beginning nor end. Common standards of time were lost in that ceaseless, sleepless nightmare of dogged marching and still more dogged fighting, whenever Prussian hordes gave the broken remnant of an army a chance to turn and smite, as the British soldier can smite even in retreat.

It was from Le Cateau that an officer friend sent a pencil scrawl to Mark.

'It is quite evident that we have taken the knock badly. With any other army one would say we're beaten. But Tommy doesn't understand the word. You can only beat him by knocking the life out of him. And even when you think he's dead, chances are he'll get up and kick you. People at home simply haven't begun to know what heroes these chaps are. Makes me sick even to think of certain supercilious folk, I seem to remember, who thought the worst of any man in uniform on principle. Great Scott, they're not fit to lick Tommy's boots.'

Mark handed that letter to Bel.

'There's one in the eye for your precious Maitland,' he remarked coolly. 'Copy it out verbatim, please, and send it to him with my compliments!'

And Bel obeyed with exemplary meekness. She had rather

objected to the tone of Maitland's last letter; and, in her own fashion, she was very much impressed. Heroism, a long way off and entirely unconnected with one's self, was an admirable thing in man.

It was near the end of August, when the Channel ports were being evacuated and the fall of Paris seemed merely a matter of days, that Mark at last found his name in the Gazette coupled with that of a distinguished Highland regiment; and in record time he was ready—uniform, equipment, parting presents and all.

Like most of his race and kind, he would have preferred an informal departure—casual 'good-byes,' as though he were going off on business for a week or so. But he had won the hearts of his people by justice, understanding, and the personal touch that was a tradition at Wynchcombe Friars: he had inspired them, by precept and exhortation, to give of their best ungrudgingly; and he could not deny them the legitimate thrill of speeding his departure with congratulations and cheers.

Only on Sunday, his last day, he evaded one ordeal by limiting his attendance at church to early service with his mother. Bel had little taste for early rising, and Mark did not press the point.

In the afternoon he delighted his humbler friends—wives of the gamekeeper, the coachman and the manager of his industrial colony—by calling on them in full uniform. Though he occasionally wore the kilt and glengarry at Inverairg, his Hampshire folk had never seen him thus attired; and their open admiration was so embarrassing that, after several hours of it, he returned limp and exhausted, clamouring for whisky and soda and the society of Bel, who could always be trusted to keep her admiration within bounds.

To her he devoted the evening; and early on Monday the more personal farewells must be said; the cheerful, casual note vigorously maintained. It was not 'the real thing' yet; and the women, in their hearts, prayed that 'the real thing' might be deferred for many months to come. Meantime, unless England was favoured with an invasion, he would be safe enough on the south-east coast of Scotland; and later on, if rooms were available, he would permit his mother and Bel to intrude upon his violent industry for a week.

Keith drove them all to the station, and behold, outside the grey stone gateway, an impromptu guard of honour lined the road

to Westover: villagers and farm hands, weavers and metal-workers, women, children and ineligible men. At sight of the motor, they broke into shouts and ragged cheers that would have moved a heart many degrees less responsive than the heart of Mark Forsyth.

'Drive slower, man,' he said to Keith; and, standing up in the car, he waved his glengarry—giving them shout for shout—till he could no more.

That vision of him, so standing, with the morning light in his eyes, the sun upon his chestnut-red hair and his kilt blown back by the wind, remained stamped indelibly upon his mother's brain. . . .

CHAPTER XIV.

'Hearts that are as one high heart,
Withholding nought from doom or bale,
Burningly offered up—to bleed,
To bear, to break, but not to fail.'

LAURENCE BINYON.

THE dream of that coveted week at Mark's war station came true about the middle of September. More: it was a success—a blessed memory unspoiled by any jarring note—and it brought the two women nearer to each other than they had been yet.

They found Mark in charge of a double company, chiefly armed with broomsticks, handling his Highlanders to some purpose; giving his spare hours to revolver practice, with plump German targets in view. His Colonel, who lost no time in making friends with Lady Forsyth, spoke of him in glowing terms, and gave his womenfolk every facility for seeing the coast defences prepared against the promised invasion. They wandered, shivering inwardly, through a maze of genuine trenches, heavily sandbagged, that, in the event of a landing, were to be held 'at all costs.' They inspected cunning entanglements of barbed wire on the beach and underground forts that looked more like heat bumps on the face of the earth than strong defensive positions; and they heard amazing stories of spies, though the Government had nominally demolished the system.

Everything conspired to make those few September days an untarnished memory. The tide of retreat had turned. The miracle had happened, and the Germans, flung back from the gates

of Paris, had been brilliantly defeated on the Marne. Hopeful souls dreamed again of a swift and decisive issue. But the Great Brain piling up armies in Whitehall still pinned his faith on England's 'last million men.'

In fact, there was only one flaw in the week of their content: it passed too soon. Then the price must be paid in the renewed wrench of parting, and for the first time Lady Forsyth saw tears in Bel's eyes. They were not allowed to fall, but they were unmistakably there.

Of course they must come again, Mark assured them at the last. 'The C.O. has fallen in love with Mums! He'd be heart-broken if I didn't give him another chance. And he's a useful chap to please. So that settles it!'

But towards the end of September, before there was time even to think of another chance, Mark had his orders. A decimated battalion was clamouring for reinforcements; and a message flashed to Wynchcombe Friars that he would be home next day on forty-eight hours' leave, picking up Bel in town.

That blunt announcement drove the blood from Lady Forsyth's face. Sheila was back with her again, and Keith had just returned from a week's absence on business connected with the Forsyth-Macnair car.

'He's got his wish,' was all she said: and went quickly out of the room.

Next morning they arrived—the two of them—Mark rather defiantly cheerful, Bel more than a little subdued. Lady Forsyth had never liked the girl better than in those two days.

To the women it seemed hard that so many of his precious hours at home must be squandered on business. But Mark had to face the fact that he might never return, and to make his dispositions accordingly. It had always been his wish to emulate his father and be practically his own land agent. But four years of minority and the long absence in Europe had obliged him to employ a trustworthy man of experience; and he was thankful for it now. George Russell, happily well over forty, had proved as capable as he was devoted, which is saying a good deal for his capacity. He possessed, moreover, a shrewder business head than either mother or son; and on occasion, to Mark's huge delight, he would assume a tenderly protective attitude, as of one whose mission in life was to save them from themselves.

In the matter of Belgian refugees, he regretted to report that Lady Forsyth was not sufficiently discriminating. They were proving, as was natural, 'a very mixed lot,' and Russell had a positive flair for the wrong sort. It was not fair on Sir Mark to crowd up his cottages with 'foreign riff-raff': the deserving would make a quite sufficient drain on his limited resources. The good fellow learnt with unconcealed relief that Lady Forsyth would soon be going to Boulogne with Miss Melrose and that he would be left practically in charge of everything.

Mark himself was thankful for business details that relieved the underlying strain. But he refused on this occasion to bid any official 'good-byes.' He had taken leave of his people when he joined the army. This final wrench was his own most private and personal affair, as they would doubtless understand.

Tea on the terrace was a creditably cheerful meal; and it was not till near dinner-time that Mark managed to slip away by himself for an hour of quiet communing with the land he loved—the woods, the river and the lordly ruins that, for him, were written all over with the inner history of his own brief twenty-seven years. Bel had asked him more than once how he could bear to leave it all; and to-night, as he saw the red sun tangled among his pine-tops, that question so shook his fortitude that he challenged it with another. Could he bear to think of German troops defiling the fair and stately face of it, terrorising with torture and outrage the men and women whose welfare was his main concern in life? Confronted with that challenge, the coward question fled ashamed.

After dinner he had half an hour's talk with Sheila, into whose hands he solemnly commended his more mercurial mother. 'She's a jewel of price,' he added frankly, 'but in certain moods she takes some managing. And on the whole you're better at it than old Keith. Don't let her crock up from the strain of it all. And write to me. Promise.'

She promised—and his mind felt more at rest.

Later on he took Bel out on to the terrace, where they paced up and down in the starlight, talking fitfully. Time was too short for all they had to say; and for that very reason they could not say one half of it. Interludes of silence increased. At last came one so prolonged that, by a mutual impulse, they came to a stand-still, near a low stone bench, confronting each other and the inexorable fact.

'Oh Mark—to-morrow!' Bel breathed unsteadily, her dim face close to his. 'It seems impossible.'

For answer he took hold of her, and sitting down, gathered her on to his knees. Then, amazed, he heard her whisper at his ear: 'Darling—I'm horribly afraid. I keep feeling—I shall never get you back.'

It was spoken at last, the fear of perpetual parting that knocked at both their hearts. But the man knew that spectre must be ignored.

'I'll come back with any luck, my Bel,' he said, kissing her, 'to claim you for good, and worry your life out! I vote we marry the first leave I get.'

He passed his hand slowly down her bare arm. 'Darling, you're cold,' he said. 'There's a dew and a half falling. Come in at once. Are we down-hearted?—No!'

The light of the hall showed her on the verge of tears. But she pulled herself together and he dismissed her with a blessing that meant more to him than to her.

In the drawing-room he found Keith alone, with a solitary electric light switched on, smoking by the open window; a privilege Helen permitted him for the sake of his company.

'Hullo! Gone—both of 'em?' Mark asked in surprise.

'Yes. I ordered them off. They looked strained and tired. Couldn't read. Couldn't talk. Your mother has some letters to write, I think. She left word—would you look in?'

'Bless her, she takes things beastly hard.'

'She does,' Keith assented briefly; and Mark proceeded to fill his pipe.

During the process Keith watched him, appraising his straight, clean manhood and cursing the devilish nature of modern war.

Presently, when Mark had finished with his pipe, he spoke.

'Keith, old chap, on the strength of peculiar circumstances and the general uncertainty of things, I'm going to make an infernally impertinent remark. To begin with, mother's most distractingly on my mind. I've fixed up most things, with a view to—possible contingencies. But I don't seem able to fix up her. If I'm knocked out—she's simply done for. Not even this precious work of hers for consolation. It all goes to Uncle Everard, who'll make an end of our colony straight away. She'll lose everything at a stroke, except Inverraig. And she—alone there—!'

He set his teeth hard, and Keith passed a long thin hand across

his eyes. 'That's the tragedy of it,' he said, adding, with forced lightness. 'Where does the impertinence come in?'

'It's jolly well coming in now. Don't bite my head off. Truth is, I'm not stone blind; and just lately—I've been wondering . . . why the deuce don't you make a match of it? You and Mums!'

Macnair started, and his face looked rather a queer colour in the dim light.

'Great heavens, Mark! Talk of explosives!'

For the moment he could get no further, and Mark was puzzled. 'You mean—it's never occurred to you?'

'I mean nothing of the sort.'

'Then I bet you *do* want to bite my head off—'

'I'm not . . . so sure,' he said slowly. His voice was more natural now. 'I always like your sledge-hammer directness. At the same time—' He rose and paced the length of the room, revolving that amazing proposition.

'If I thought there was a ghost of a chance,' Mark persisted, as Keith turned in his stride, 'it would take a ton weight off my mind.'

'Not to mention mine,' Keith answered smiling; and when he reached the window he put a hand on Mark's shoulder. 'As it seems a case of plain speaking to-night, I may as well admit the truth. She's been the star of my life for fifteen years—and I'd give all I possess to marry her.'

Mark's eyebrows went up.

'And she ten years a widow! Why not have a shot at it, old chap, and make this Boulogne trip a sort of war honeymoon—'

'My dear boy! The pace you young fellows travel! And you ignore . . . there's Helen herself to be reckoned with—'

For the first time in his life Mark saw the blood mount into Keith's face and heard him hesitate over his mother's name—phenomena that checked his fluency a little but rather increased his zeal.

'Well, if you don't have a try,' he said, 'hanged if the C.O. won't forestall you. He's dead smitten. Two lovers at fifty—she ought to be ashamed of herself!'

But Keith seemed no way perturbed by the possibility of a rival.

'If she ever marries again,' he said quietly, 'it will be myself. But, Mark, is it possible you've never realised that, for her, your father is still as much alive as when he walked this earth? There's

a modest percentage of human beings so made, and a good few of them are Scots. For them there is actually neither death, nor separation. I believe your father still bars my way, as much as he did when—I first loved her. Of course . . . I may exaggerate!’

‘Hope you do!’ Mark was deeply moved. ‘She doesn’t often speak of him to me.’

‘Nor to me. But—when she does, it’s quite clear.’

‘M. Rough luck. All the same, if the worst happens, give me your word you’ll have a try . . . for her sake and mine as well as your own. No one would dream there’s ten years between you.’

Keith simply held out his hand and Mark’s closed on it hard. The good understanding that had always existed between them was complete.

Mark found his mother writing letters in bed. He had accused her more than once of writing them in her bath. She looked strained and tired, as Keith said; but in her blue dressing-jacket, with hair demurely parted and a thick plait over her shoulder, she appeared younger, if anything, than the man he had left downstairs.

‘Incurable woman!’ he said lightly. ‘Who’s your victim this time?’

She told him; and while she read out snatches of her letter, Mark—watching her with new eyes—wondered, had she the least inkling? Would a word from him be of any service to Keith?

Curiosity impelled him to talk of the Boulogne trip, to enlarge on his confidence in Keith, and even to touch on the unconventional character of the whole plan. Neither in look nor tone could he detect a glimmer of after-thought or shadow of self-consciousness. The causes of her satisfaction were clear as daylight: longing to be in the same country as himself, candid pleasure in Keith’s and Sheila’s company, and her innate love of getting off the beaten track.

‘It’s just one of the many beautiful things that a genuine, understanding friendship makes possible,’ she concluded, stamping and sealing her letter: and Mark began to feel rather sorry for Keith. But he wisely refrained from any hint of his own knowledge. It would probably do no good and would certainly spoil her pleasure in going.

Instead, he commandeered her writing-board, an act of tyranny that would normally have involved a fight. Her unnatural meekness

hurt him more sharply than any words of love, could she have brought herself to speak them. When he came back to the bed, she indicated a little pile of Active Service Compendiums and a pocket Red-letter Testament on the table beside her. She had already given him his wrist-watch and a silver flask.

'That *from* me,' she said, touching the Book, 'and those *for* me. I shall be hungry for news, remember, and out of touch with Bel, who will get it all.'

'Not quite all—faithless and unbelieving!' he answered, echoing her lightness. Then he added with decision: 'You're not coming up to town, Mums; not even to the station—understand? It'll be bad enough having Bel. But she's cooler all through. No matter how brave you are, I can always feel you quivering inside. And I couldn't stand it. Nor could you.'

She shook her head. 'It was only—a temptation. Not to miss . . .'

A spasm crossed her face, and he went down on his knees beside her.

'Darling, if we are going to make fools of ourselves,' he said huskily, 'I'd better be off. It's near midnight. Time you were asleep.' No answer; and he spoke still lower. 'Give me your blessing, Mums—like when I went to school.'

Still without speaking, she laid her hands on his bowed head; and from his heart he echoed her passionate silent plea for his safe return.

Then he stood up and kissed her good-night.

For sheer misery and discomfort nothing could exceed the actual hour or two before departure. Bel could be with him in his room while he 'completed his mobilisation.' The rest could only hang about aimlessly, making futile talk or inventing futile occupations to keep thought at bay. In the background several maids and a grey-haired butler hovered fitfully; and Bobs, a picture of abject misery, lay awaiting his master at the foot of the stairs.

He came at last, in a violent hurry, shouting an order to Keith and springing clean over the prostrate Bobs.

Bel followed more leisurely, flushed a little, but controlled. Then the hovering servants came forward and Helen slipped quietly into her husband's study.

There, at last, Mark came to her—followed by an apparently tailless Bobs.

Somehow she contrived to smile. Then his arms were round her, crushing her to him.

'God bless you,' he whispered. 'Don't fret. It's going to be all right. And—if it isn't . . . it'll *still* be all right.'

Then he kissed her again and let her go.

From the threshold he waved to her, smiling resolutely, though tears stood in his eyes. She waved back to him. The door shut between them. He was gone.

As she stood motionless, fighting back her grief, she was startled by that sharp, familiar pang in the region of her heart, and a momentary darkness as if a raven's wing had brushed across her eyes. She shivered and kneeled hastily down to comfort the desolate Bobs, while her tears fell, unchecked now, upon his rough brown head.

CHAPTER XV.

'Here is the hard paradox: war . . . this devilish, bestial, senseless thing, produces in masses—as peace distinctly does not produce them—brothers and sisters to Christ.'—G. A. B. DEWAR.

WYNCHCOMBE FRIARS without Mark was no place to tarry in, but there seemed no end to the delays; and Keith turned even these to good account by teaching Sheila to drive the Forsyth-Macnair car. Two drivers with one orderly would get through twice the work.

It was near the middle of October when, at last, they found themselves speeding towards Folkestone. Keith, who had laid aside philosophy 'for the duration of the war,' delighted in his own small ark of salvation as a captain delights in his ship. From 'stem to stern' she was perfect as skill and money could make her; fitted up with four stretchers and bedding; crammed to the limit of her capacity with first-aid appliances and a minimum of luggage.

Here and there autumn had laid a fiery finger on the woods. Birches and elms were tipped with gold. Otherwise the October sun, riding in a cloudless heaven, suggested high summer. Mark had been gone nearly a fortnight. Two brief cheerful letters assured his mother he was alive and well. Till she could see him again, those simple facts were all that vitally concerned herself; though pessimists prophesied invasion by Zeppelin and transport; and over there across the Channel, Belgium continued her heroic stand against the all-devouring, all-defiling German Army.

The fall of Antwerp had resounded through Europe like the knell of doom. For a time, even the bravest were shaken with dismay, and the stream of refugees increased daily. The streets of Folkestone overflowed with that pitiful flotsam of wrecked cities. Some wept; some cursed; some prayed; but the prevailing expression was a terrible stunned indifference, as though shock on shock had hammered them into automata that could move and eat and sleep, but could no longer feel.

In Boulogne—when they reached it—the flotsam of wrecked battalions was more in evidence. Things were still primitive here as regards organisation, but already the place was an English colony. The British Red Cross Society was beginning to make things move and owners of private cars were doing splendid service. To these were now added the unrelated trio from Wynchcombe Friars. But their first objective was Rouen, where a young Stuart nephew lay badly wounded, craving for the sight of a face from home. His invalid mother could not get to him; so Lady Forsyth went in her stead, only to find on arrival that the boy had been dead an hour. For the sake of that far-away mother she asked to see him, though privately she dreaded the ordeal. She was aware, suddenly, of a very unheroic shrinking from close contact with the awful actualities of war. But that shrinking in no way affected her zeal for the work in hand.

News that a train-load of casualties was expected that evening sent them full speed to the station. It was dusk when they arrived to find the train in and the process of unloading begun. At the entrance, a group of Red Cross officials stood talking and laughing, hardened by habit to the painful scene. As the car drew up they crowded round, admiring it and questioning Macnair, while tragic burdens were carried past them in the half light.

Helen, too overwrought to make allowances, wondered how Keith had the patience to answer them.

Presently, her attention was caught by a number of black shadows, like wheelbarrows abnormally large and high.

'What are those?' she asked a porter, and discovered that they were severely wounded men, on wheeled stretchers, either too brave or too exhausted to utter a sound of complaint.

At that she could restrain herself no longer.

'Keith,' she exclaimed, flagrantly interrupting a Medical Authority with a passion for cars, '*why* are those unfortunate

men kept hanging about in this noisy place? Can't we get four of them away?'

But Medical Authority checked her impatience in a tone of mild reproof.

'Those fellows are all right where they are, Lady Forsyth,' he said. 'They're not fit to be moved off their stretchers. So we're waiting for the trams. If you like to back into the station, you may pick up some milder cases who'll be glad of a lift.'

They backed in accordingly and picked up two maimed men and a remarkably cheerful subaltern with his left arm in a sling and a bandage across one eye. As they passed out, Keith offered to return for another load; and, to Helen's disgust, the offer was politely declined.

By the time they reached the field hospital—a collection of marquees, fitted up with electric light—it was nearly ten o'clock.

'Quite early; but as we don't seem to be *wanted*, I suppose we must go to bed,' Helen remarked with doleful emphasis, as they re-settled the car. 'I feel distinctly snubbed. Four out of three hundred! What's that?'

'A beginning—and no bad one!' Keith answered placidly, filling his pipe. 'Fanshawe says if we report ourselves at Boulogne we shall get all the work we want. There's heavy fighting on the north—a big battle developing for Ypres and Calais.'

To Boulogne they returned accordingly, and had no cause this time to feel either snubbed or superfluous. There was still a famine of cars at the Base and the wounded were arriving in thousands: their bodies mangled and mutilated; their spirits, in the main, unquenched.

Macnair and his party drove up to their hotel at noon, and their greeting from the Red Cross Authority was very much to the point.

'All available cars wanted immediately at the Gare Maritime. Better get some lunch first.'

That lunch was of the briefest. Keith dumped their luggage in the hall without so much as asking if there were rooms to be had. Helen did not even open the coveted letter from Mark till they were back in the motor, speeding towards the bare unsheltered *gare*, where impromptu and comfortless hospital trains disgorged their tragic loads. Mercifully the sun of that miraculous autumn still shone unclouded; and, by the time autumn gave place to the wettest winter in decades, better arrangements had been made.

All that afternoon they worked unceasingly, and late into the night. Back and forth, back and forth between station and hospital, jolting inevitably over railway lines, and a strip of merciless cobble pavement that, for men with shattered limbs, hurriedly dressed, involved several minutes of excruciating agony.

'Keith, couldn't they possibly take up that cruel bit of *pavé*?' Helen pleaded after their seventh journey with three men at death's door. 'Even a raw road would be better than those stones.'

'I'll move heaven and earth to get it improved,' he assured her, little guessing that he had pledged himself to a labour of Hercules.

By the time they could take breath and think about finding beds, they were all dead weary, sustained only by the knowledge that they had given their mite of service to the utmost of their power. In Mark's letter, which Helen had scarcely found time to read, there was a sentence on this head that had haunted her brain throughout those strenuous hours.

'Oh Mums, if only the good casual folk at home could be made *see* even the half of what we see in the way of wanton destruction and calculated brutality, wherever the gentle German has left his trail, they'd possibly begin to realise the powers of evil we're up against in this war, and things in general would march to a different tune. But they can't *see*. That's the trouble. And hearing about such things isn't the same at all. If we're ever going to win through hell to human conditions again, it won't be merely by signing cheques and making speeches, but by the individual personal service of every man and woman in whatever capacity; and I'm proud to feel you three are giving it like Trojans. God bless you all!'

She stood gleaning a few more scraps under an electric light, when Keith came up to say he had secured a room for her and Sheila; and a friendly Irish doctor had offered him a bed in his hospital train.

'I'm in great luck with my two assistants,' he added, smiling down at her eager, tired face. 'Sheila betters my expectation, which is saying a good deal. Her self-possession to-day astonished me. She'd have the nerve for advance ambulance work in the firing line, I do believe. But I'm glad we've got her safe here.'

He glanced towards her where she sat at a writing-table, scribbling

a hurried letter to Mark in praise of their mutually beloved Mums. Then he went up and touched her shoulder.

'Good-night, Sheila,' he said. 'Get to bed sharp, both of you. I'll call for you to-morrow.'

'We'll be ready early,' she answered, looking up at him; and he discovered, to his surprise, that her eyes were swimming in tears.

There was a certain monotony about the days of unremitting work that followed—a monotony tinged with its own peculiar high lights and shadows; with beauty and terror, fortitude and anguish, the incoming and outgoing pulse-beat of life at the Base. Scarcely a day passed without some minor incident, some flash of human revelation that none of them would forget while they lived.

For Helen—with every nerve responsive to the suffering around them—the strain of it all proved no light matter; yet, in retrospect, she counted those terrible days as among the richest experiences of her life.

To her it was distracting that wounded men should suffer additional miseries from the fact that even in two and a half months of war it had been impossible to cope with all the complex needs of the situation. Hospitals were few and quite inadequate. The magnificent ambulance trains of later days were still in the workshops at home; while untiring men on the spot did the best they could with the high, comfortless passenger coaches of France. Even the more luxurious sleeping carriages were too cramped for the ingress and egress of badly wounded men; and when, at last, these were landed, like so many bales of goods, on the unsheltered platform of the *gare*, shortage of ambulance cars and trained stretcher-bearers added the finishing touch to their nightmare journey. But soon after Keith's arrival, the zeal and organisation of the British Red Cross began to make themselves felt, in this respect as in others. Every ambulance that could be raised in London was rushed across to Boulogne, till in a few days there were eighty of one kind or another plying between train and hospital and ship.

For all that, there was still need of superhuman exertion to cope, even inadequately, with the terrible stream of wounded—the backwash, as it were, from the Homeric struggle round Ypres. In that region the Belgians were making their last desperate stand, and war-worn British divisions—haggard, sleepless, cruelly depleted

—were still miraculously holding their own against army corps on army corps of fresh German troops heartened by an overwhelming superiority in guns and shells. There—during those awful days—whole battalions of the finest troops on earth practically ceased to exist; and thence came the main influx of comfortless, overcrowded trains.

Steadily the tale of wounded swelled, till it reached an average of two thousand a day. And what were eighty cars among so many? Little better than the five loaves and two small fishes in Galilee; and here was no hope of miraculous intervention. The outstanding miracle of that golden October—when England neither knew her peril nor the full cost of her salvation—was the superhuman fortitude of those that were broken on the wheel and the untiring energy of those who served them in the teeth of baffling conditions.

Day after day the open platform was thronged with men on stretchers in all stages of mental and bodily collapse: British, Indian, French, Belgian, German—brothers all, for the moment, in suffering if in nothing else. Some stared wildly and talked nonsense; some were apathetic; some incurably cheerful, though often their wounds had not been dressed for days.

The lack of trained stretcher-bearers was a serious difficulty till St. John Ambulance Association came to the rescue. Porters, willing but unskilful, did what they could. Keith himself, and others like him, helped to carry scores of men. From early morning till near midnight the cars of rescue ran to and fro; but in spite of every effort there were unavoidable delays. Men died there on the stretchers, or in draughty cars, while red-tape regulations kept them waiting outside hospitals and ships. And that cruel strip of *pavé* remained unsmoothed, though Keith had pressed the point with unauthorised persistence. And Helen cursed—so far as her ladyhood permitted—every time they crossed it with patients in the last extremity.

The unceasing rush of work left small leisure for nightmares, or even for anxiety; but the strain and pain of it were taxing her nerves to breaking-point. Always, as they drew near the familiar crowded station, there sprang the inevitable question: 'Will it be Mark this time?' But, though the passing days brought many from his regiment, Mark was not found among them.

As for Sheila, her sensitive spirit felt the test more acutely than either of the elders, who kept watchful eyes on her, were allowed

to suspect. Only by clinging desperately to her childhood's code of courage could she save herself, at times, from the ignominy of collapse. It was sustaining, too, to feel that Keith trusted her, that Helen relied on her; and Mark's occasional letters—full of a brotherly tenderness that showed little in his speech—made it seem possible to win through anything without flinching visibly. The fact that she could face this inferno of pain and death and mental anguish without a sense of bitterness or rebellion was more of an asset than she knew. It was, in fact, the keystone of her character, the secret of her spiritual poise. For to accept, actively to accept, spells capacity to transcend; but that she had still to discover.

They had little time, any of them, for abstract or personal thought. The war, and its pressing demands on them, constituted their life. Keith had secured a small private sitting-room, where they could enjoy an occasional evening of quiet and rest. But as work was seldom over till near eleven, such oases were rare indeed. At times their heads felt stunned with the eternal rattling to and fro, their hearts numbed by contact with the awful harvest of a modern battlefield. But on the whole they loved their work, and would not have been elsewhere for a kingdom.

They grew skilled in the art of talking the men's minds away from their sufferings; and Sheila—'Mouse' though she was—showed so notable a gift for this form of spiritual healing, that Lady Forsyth finally christened her 'Queen of the Poor Things.' Some mother-quality in her touch and tone seemed to go straight to their hearts. Men who left the station groaning and clenching their teeth, to keep the curses back, would surprisingly soon be conjured into recounting their adventures, or, better still, talking of wives and children at home.

Keith himself confessed that he had never properly appreciated the British Tommy till he carried him wounded, and Helen lost her heart a dozen times over. More than once, when they chanced upon men shattered and bandaged past human recognition, she came very near losing her head; but only once did she disgrace herself by fainting outright.

On that occasion Keith carried her straight back to their hotel, laid her on the sofa and stayed by her till she was sufficiently recovered to feel very much ashamed of herself.

'Promise I won't do it again,' she assured him, as he stood leaning over her.

'No, that you *certainly* won't,' he said sternly. 'If ever you do, I shall pack you straight off home. To-night, for a punishment, you'll go early to bed. Sheila will be quite safe with me.'

Argument and rebellion were useless. Moreover, she was honestly exhausted, and before ten o'clock she was sound asleep. But even weariness could not break the habit of short rest, and by one of the morning she was amazingly wide awake.

Some distant sound had roused her, and now it drew nearer—footsteps and voices; men cheering and singing of 'la gloire' and 'la mort.' Nearer still they came, tramping along the pavement, till they were almost under her open window.

Then she was aware of a discordant note in that gallant chorus. One voice, raised in terror and remonstrance, was trying to dominate those other voices that were obviously shouting it down.

'J'ai peur! Mon Dieu, camarades, j'ai peur!'

The words reached her distinctly now. But the rest, unheeding, sang louder than ever of 'la mort' and 'la gloire.'

Possibly they were sorry for him. The coward is the unhappiest of men. Yet he too, being 'enfant de la patrie,' must go, even as others went; and Helen Forsyth, hearing him go, found the tears streaming down her face—not for the coercion of one reluctant citizen, but for the unending horror and misery of it all: the fear and the anguish and the calculated cruelty that were so infinitely worse than death.

Sheila, sleeping the profound sleep of healthily exhausted youth, stirred not an eyelash even when the noise was at its height. But for Helen that pitiful interlude had put an end to rest and had opened the door to nightmare memories and her own most private fears.

Since the letter that greeted her, there had been one barren field post-card. Even that was ten days old. And away there, in the trenches, the struggle seemed to wax fiercer every hour.

The blank parallelogram of her window gleamed pale grey before, in spite of herself, she fell asleep.

The strain of Mark's sudden silence told upon the others also. It was tacitly assumed that postal arrangements were disorganised. Each hoped that the rest believed in that consoling fiction; but privately, they were sceptics all.

Helen continued to post his paper and her own thick envelope

every other day in the hope that he was still to be found somewhere in the terrible maze of trenches that drew England's best and bravest as a magnet draws steel.

Meantime they were thankful for unremitting work—for the constant movement and interest of life at the Base. Young officers, eager for action, might be bored to extinction by a few weeks in camp or in one of the crowded hotels; but an observer, blessed with humour and a large love of human nature, could not fail to find at every turn food for thought, for laughter and for tears.

War is neither all horror, nor all heroism, or it could not be waged by flesh and blood. Soldiers who can die like gods, or fight as the beasts that perish, are, in the intervals, men of like passions with their kind. And genuine soldiers were scarce among those who now poured into Boulogne, to fill the gaps in that dangerously thin line round Ypres—Territorials and schoolmasters, clergymen and clerks, lords of commerce and lords of the land; dissimilar in almost every essential, yet welded together by one common resolve, one common faith: a crusade indeed, as Mark had said.

And the manifold needs of a host undreamed of by the wildest, wickedest 'militarists,' demanded the existence of that other army chiefly congregated at the Base: doctors, nurses, chaplains, ambulance folk, owners of private cars, and those sorrowful birds of passage—relations of dying or dangerously wounded men. On the quays, in streets and hotels they thronged, those incongruous fragments of the world's greatest drama; and Lady Forsyth never tired of watching them or listening to their snatches of talk. Neither weariness, nor nightmare visions, nor anxiety, even, could blunt the edge of her keen interest in the human panorama.

'Oh, Sheila, my lamb,' she exclaimed one evening after a day of very varied emotions, 'aren't people—all sorts and kinds of them—passionately interesting? Even when I'm laid on the uttermost shelf I shall still be always peeping over the edge!'

'And you'll always find me peeping up at you,' the girl answered, smiling at the quaint conceit. 'It's simply wonderful, being with you—through all this!'

A temporary lull in the stream of wounded was followed, too soon, by a renewed rush of hospital trains filled to overflowing—the harvest of a fresh German onslaught. But by this time there were more cars and more stretcher-bearers. Ambulance trains, splendidly equipped, were being hurried out from England; and

the Customs sheds at the station had become a great shelter, roughly partitioned into dressing-stations, for those who had need of immediate care. From this seed of voluntary effort there sprang up, in time, a big stationary hospital; but by then the Forsyth-Macnair car was needed elsewhere.

Meantime, in every effort to minimise the sufferings of the men he served, Keith was actively to the fore. Helen herself was amazed at his energy and versatility—he whom she had hitherto regarded as a man wedded entirely to books and thought. But among all the surprises of a war rich in surprise, good and evil, were none more remarkable than such unlooked-for revelations of human capacity and character.

Day in, day out, the work went on. There were strange discoveries, sad and glad, on that ever-crowded platform; but of the three they looked for—Mark, Maurice and Ralph—never a sign, as yet.

(To be continued.)

